VISIT…

Steve Bailey • Bass Guitar Series

# Five String Bass

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Thanks to Jack Austin, A.B. King, Don Mock, B.F. and E.C. Bailey, The Musicians Institute and Fender/Heartfield. Special thanks to M.B. Ford for the Jazz Bass.

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of 5-string Bass. What was a relatively new and exotic instrument a few years ago has now evolved into a common, if not obligatory instrument both live and in the studio. Although there are many owners of 5-string basses, few explore the instrument to its full potential initially. Instead of approaching it as a four string with an extra lower string that "gets in the way as much as it helps", we'll explore this 130 gauge "opponent" paying particular attention to its idiosyncracies and subtleties. This will improve your part playing, reading and improvising skills as well as adding new dimension to your harmonic and chord voicing technique.

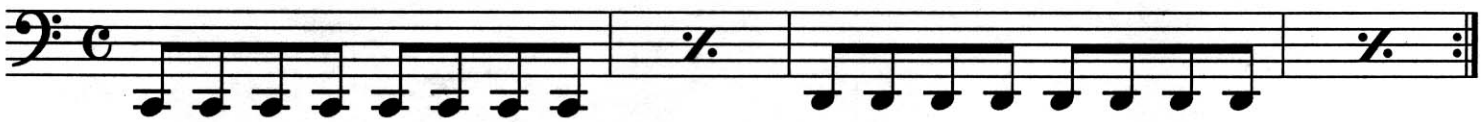
I wish this book were around when I first got my 5-string. I took it to the stage the very first night I received it (after practicing in the hotel room all afternoon). The first song was simple and the low notes drew favorable and amused attention from my boss, who traced my cords looking for an octave divider. The second song was extremely complicated and although I had been playing the show for 6 months (and knew the song inside out) I proceeded to embarrass myself by getting totally lost and flustered due to the disorienting effect of the B string. My boss leaned over to me and said, "Steve, I think you should learn to the •?#@!%& before bringing it on stage!!" This probably wouldn't be etched so clearly in my mind had my "boss" not been Dizzy Gillespie and the audience was more than the population of Bugtussle and Mayberry RFD combined.

# UNIT ONE

## THE LOW "B" STRING

Assuming you have a low B (instead of a High C or B), you will be asked to double synth lines and provide "Ultra Bottom". Most new 5-string players take much too long to take full advantage of the B string. Not only does the B add extended range but it makes possible a whole new chordal spectrum. When reading, you can cut your shifts down by 20-40% as well as playing your lines smoother and more consistent. We will start this course with many scaler exercises just to familiarize you with the B string in *all positions!!* I will label the position by fret number.

***EXAMPLE 1-1:***
*1st Pos.*



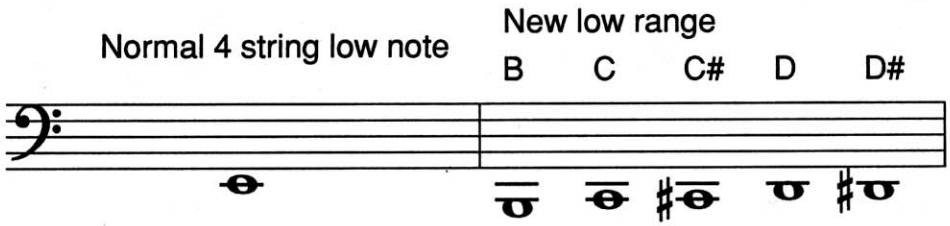
As you can see, pulling a clean sound (i.e., no buzz or noise) out of the B is a very delicate operation. If you get a lot of buzz, raising the string slightly could cure it. B strings vary in gauge from approximately .120 to as high as .160 of an inch. There are many different theories on what size is best. I started at .125 and now I'm at .135-.140. I have also discovered that the tapered end strings vibrate better (sustain more) as well as "speak" faster. Some players may disagree, so experiment; you be the judge.

***EXAMPLE 1-2:***

Neck construction (multi-laminated), fingerboard material (ebony, rosewood, synthetic, etc.), bridge, and pickup selection are all integral factors in low B performance, as well as playing technique. Your amp system is also *crucial.*

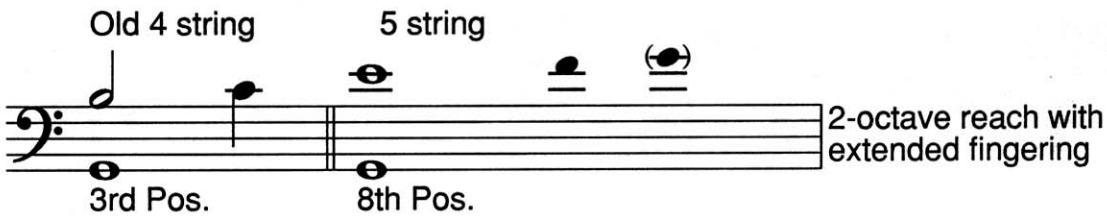
***EXAMPLE 1-3:***

EXTENDED RANGE



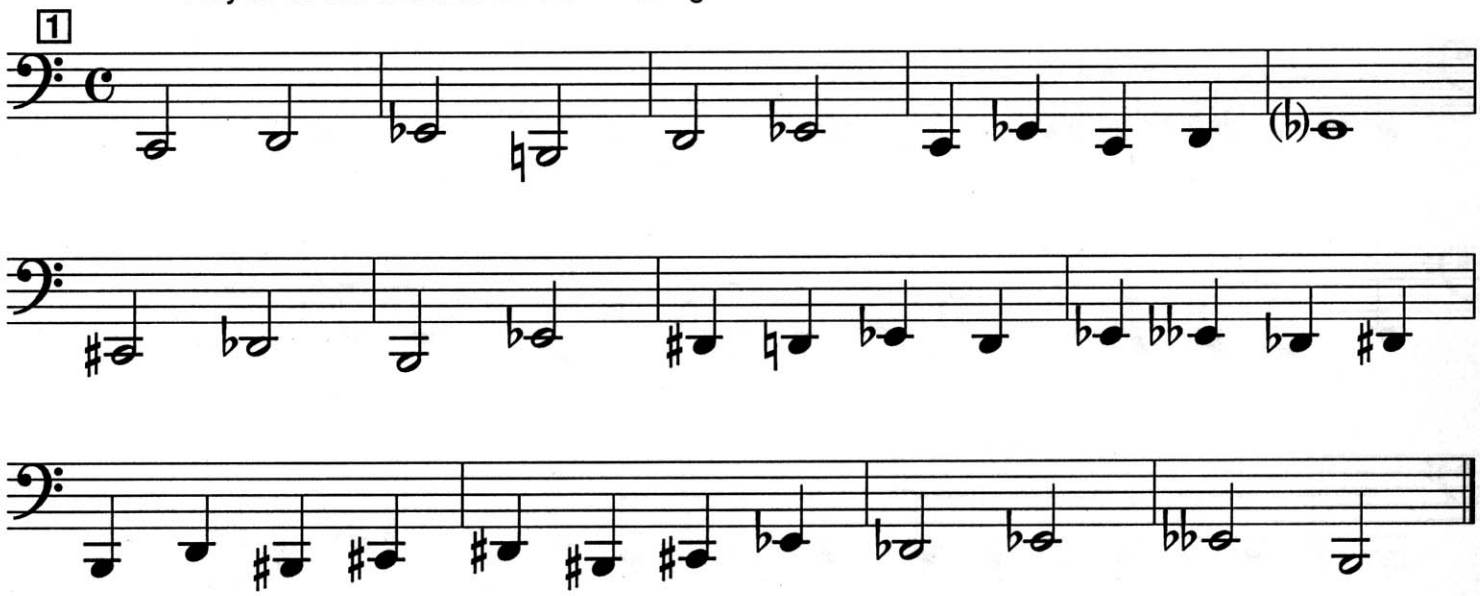

While you used to have 10th's easily within each, 13th's and higher are now easily reached.

***EXAMPLE 1-4:***

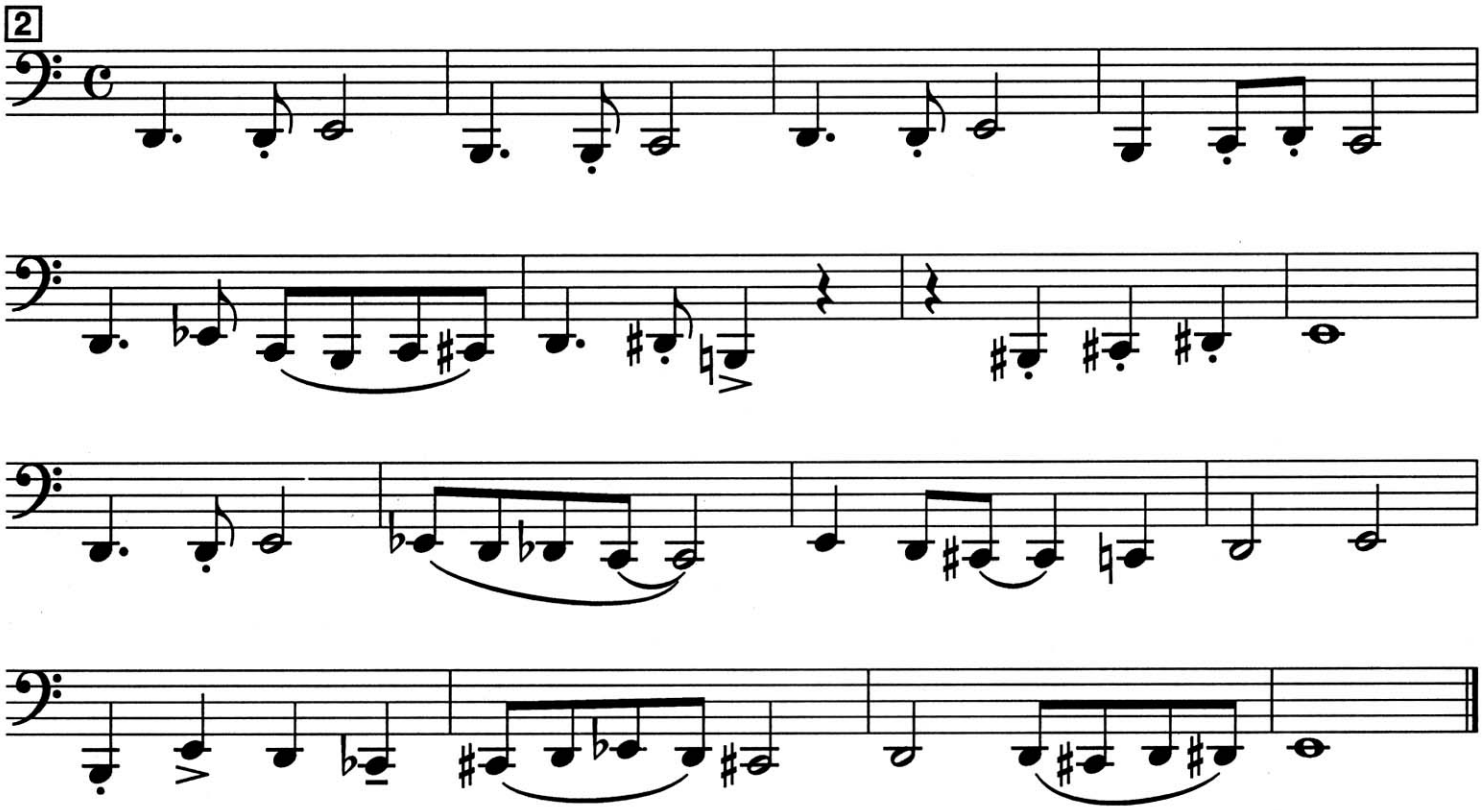



NOTE: All the examples in this lesson should be played with a metronome or drum machine. Having and keeping good time is always the priority.

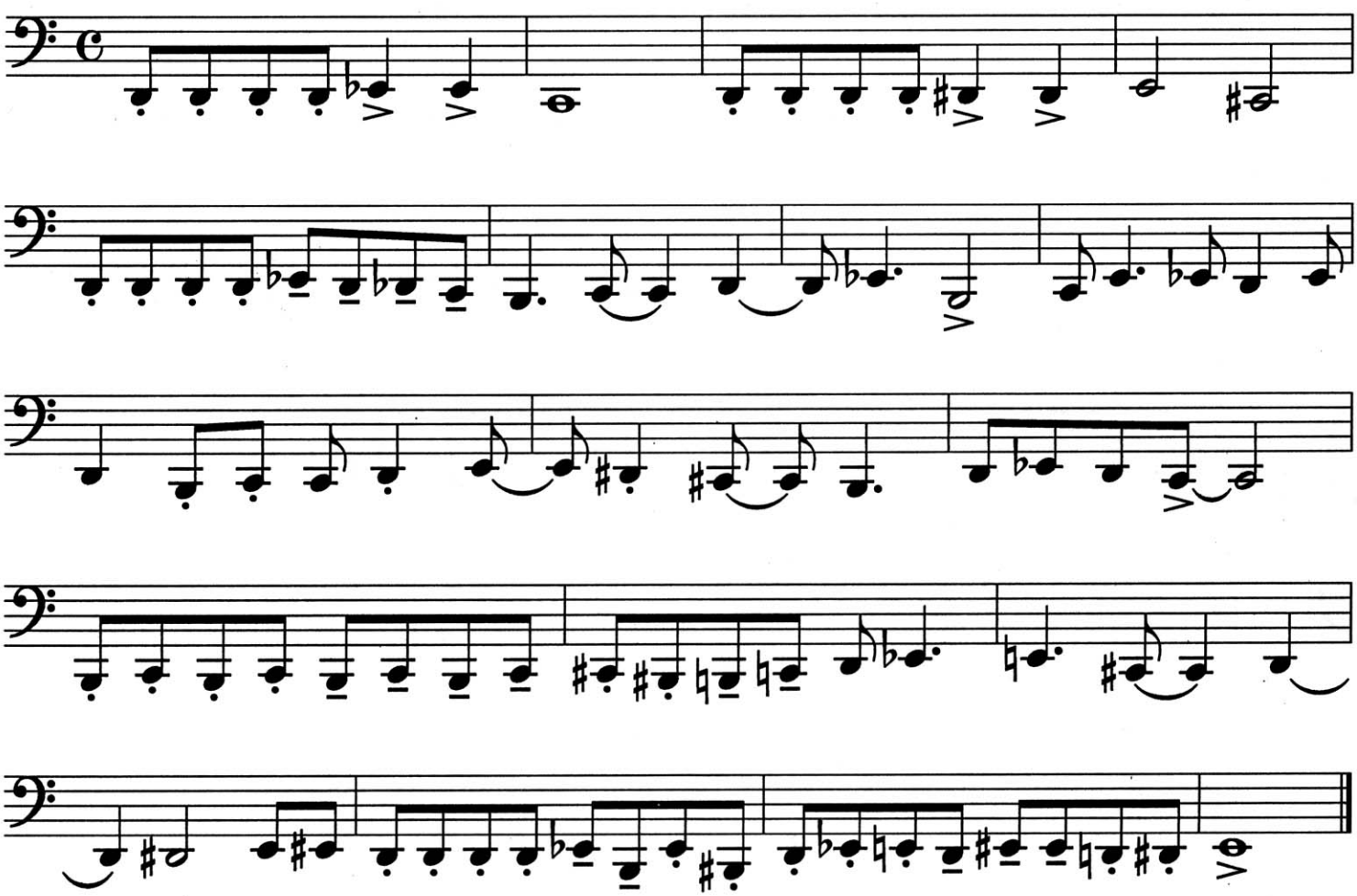
***Exercise 1:*** Practice "pulling" a sound out of this "B" string. Reading in this register takes some getting used to. Play all of this exercise on the "B" string.



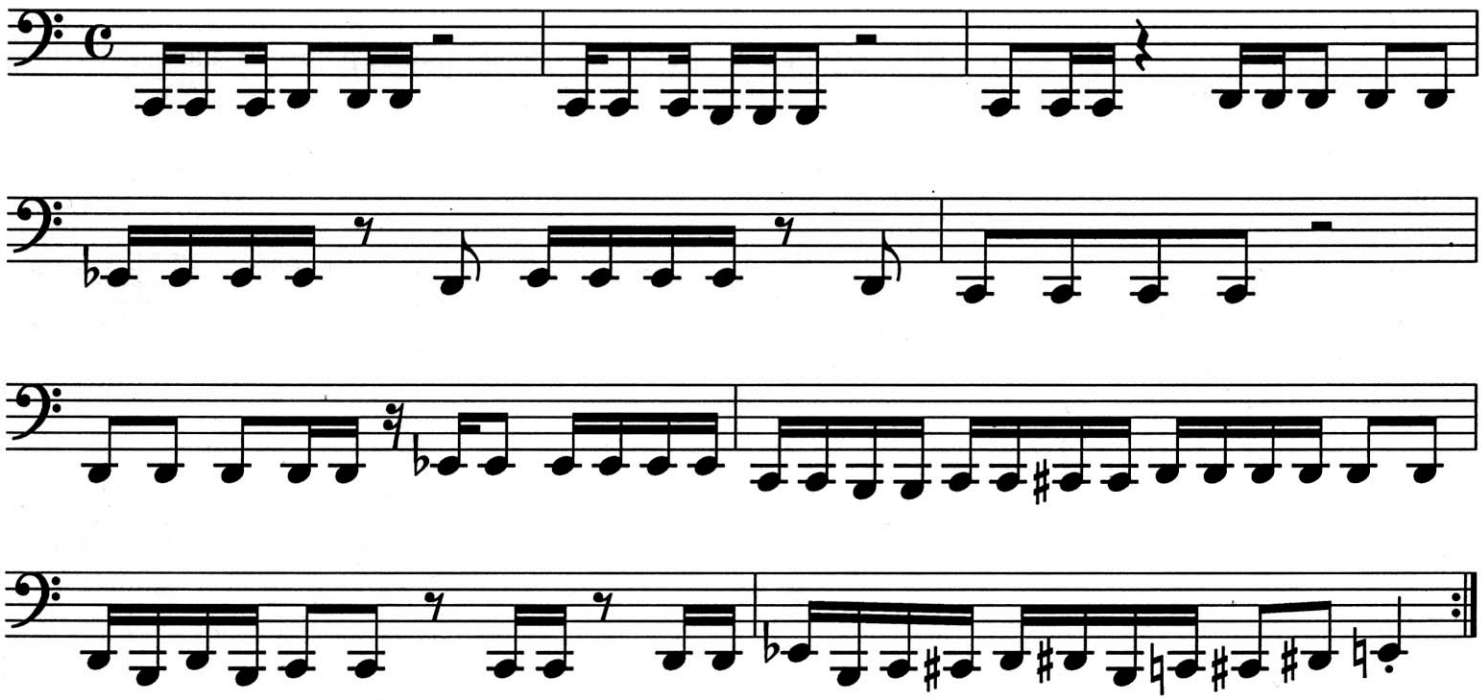
NOTE: Concentrate on making it clean and accurate. Make the notes speak, and play the markings as written.




***Exercise 2:*** Play as written. Play on your fingertips and follow the markings (staccato, etc.) accurately.



***Exercise 3:*** Play all notes short. Be *very* accurate. Repeat and slowly build *speed.*



If you are able, it is of great value to record yourself and analyze the results. Tape will give you an accurate reading on how articulate your "B" is speaking.

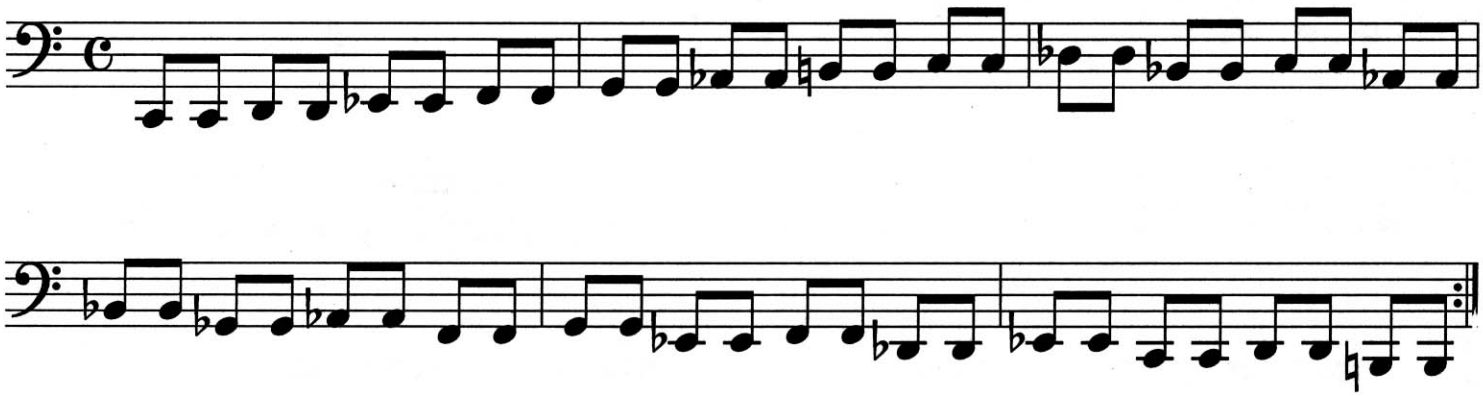
A great practice tip: PLAY 8th OR QUARTER NOTES INTO YOUR 4-TRACK (or anything with some sort of VU meter) AND TRY TO PUT THE NEEDLE (or L.E.D.) AT THE SAME POINT WITH EACH ATTACK. GOOD LUCK.

# UNIT TWO

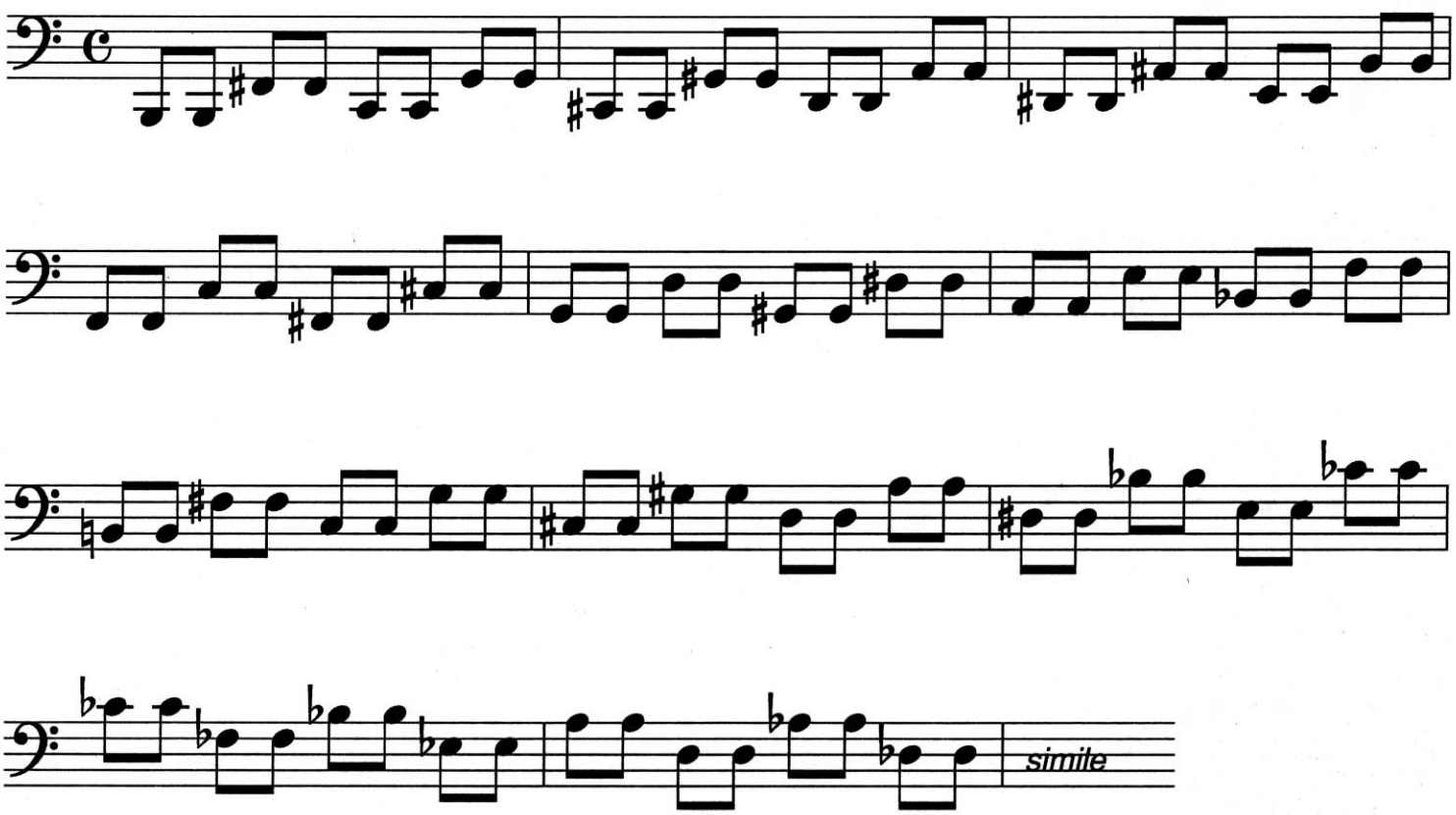
## FIRST POSITION

This is a continuation of Unit #1. The other strings will be added gradually, paying particular attention to string crossing and fingering (left hand & right hand).

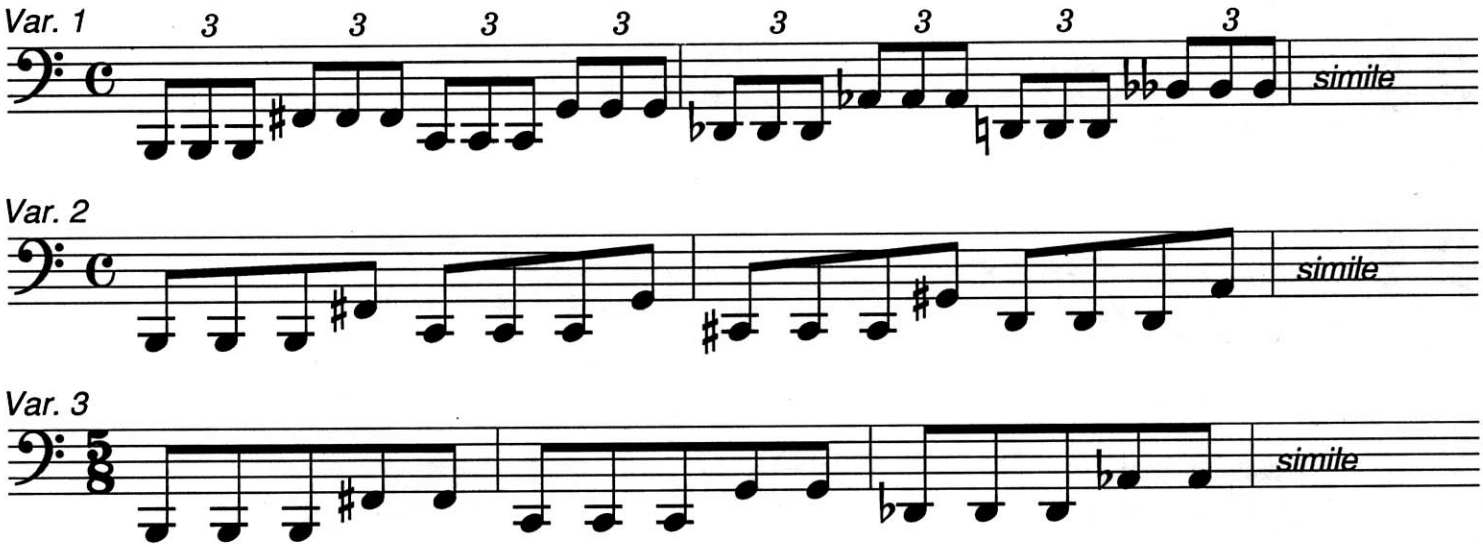
***Exercise 1:*** Start these *slowly* with emphasis on articulation and "evenness". Until otherwise instructed, all these should be played below 5th position.



***Exercise 2:*** Play the entire exercise in 1st position (using open strings). Play on left hand fingertips and with consistent right hand alternation (1-2, 1-2-3-2, etc.). Make it even!! This covers the whole 1st position. Apply logical fingerings using 1 finger per fret.



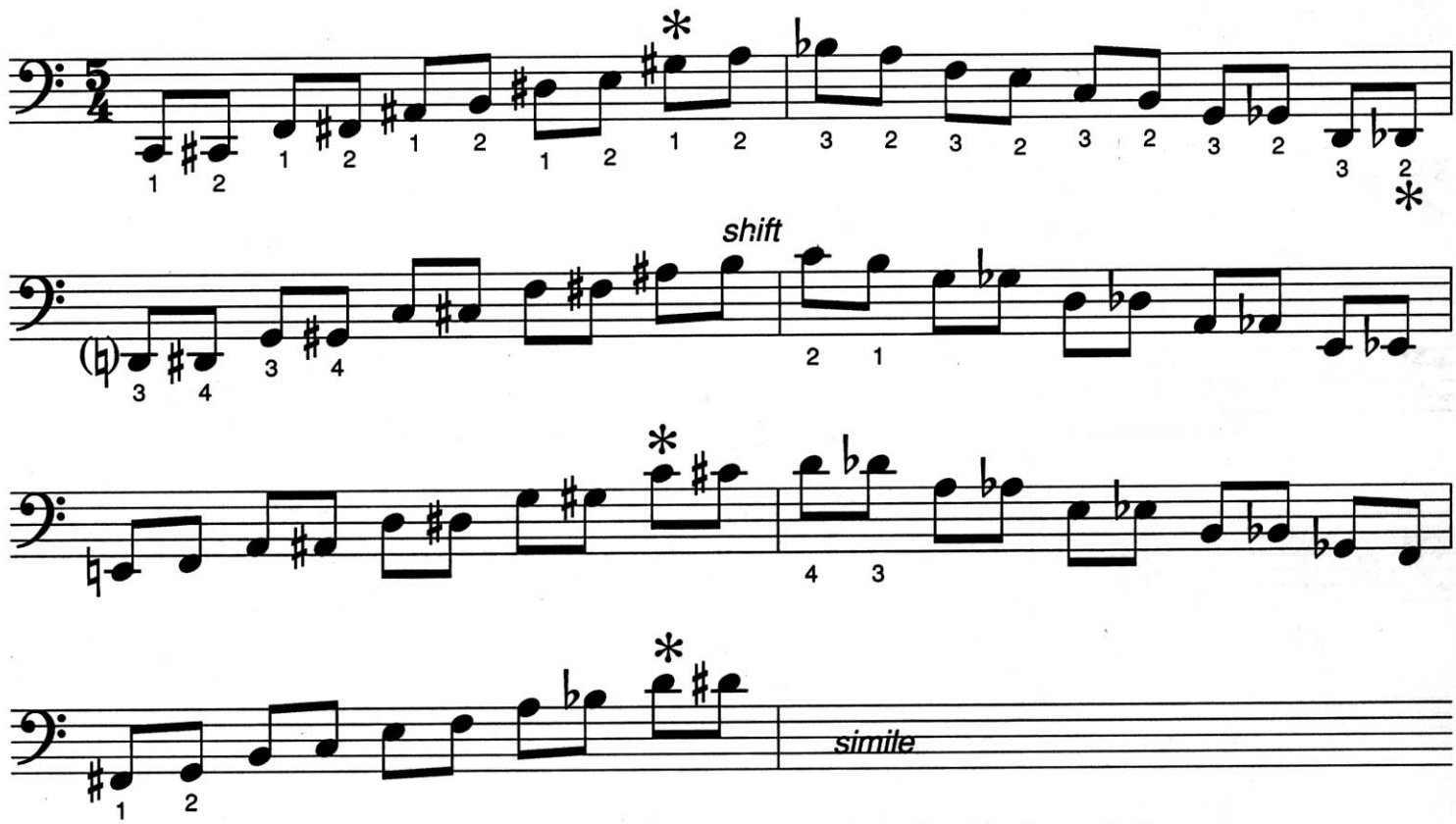
***Exercise 3:*** Use these for your right hand with your 1st & 2nd or 1st, 2nd & 3rd fingers alternating. Start at a reasonable tempo and follow through on the whole exercise. Be consistent.




***HAZARD #1:*** Those of you familiar with the Hazard series* can just adapt to these. Those that aren't:

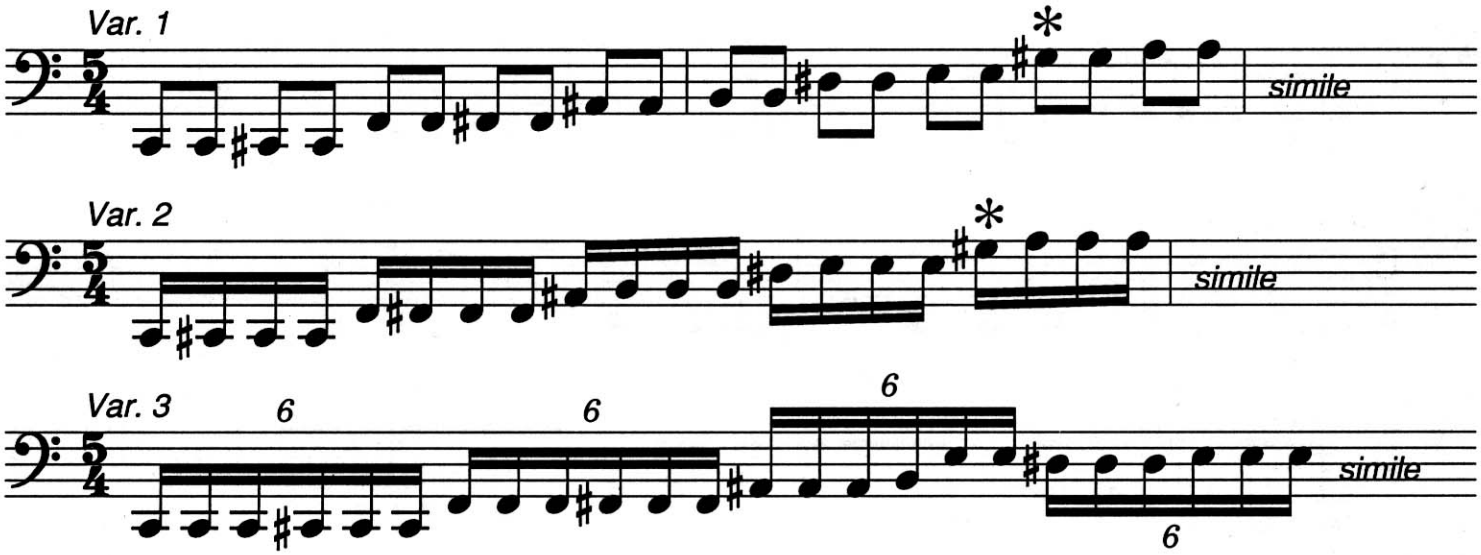
1. Play on your fingertips.
2. Where starred (✻), keep fingers down until shift.
3. STOP when pain comes (it will).
4. Keep fingers low.
5. Shifts are critical. Make them smooth and silent.

***Exercise 4:*** Don't be intimidated by these. Practice them slowly and methodically.

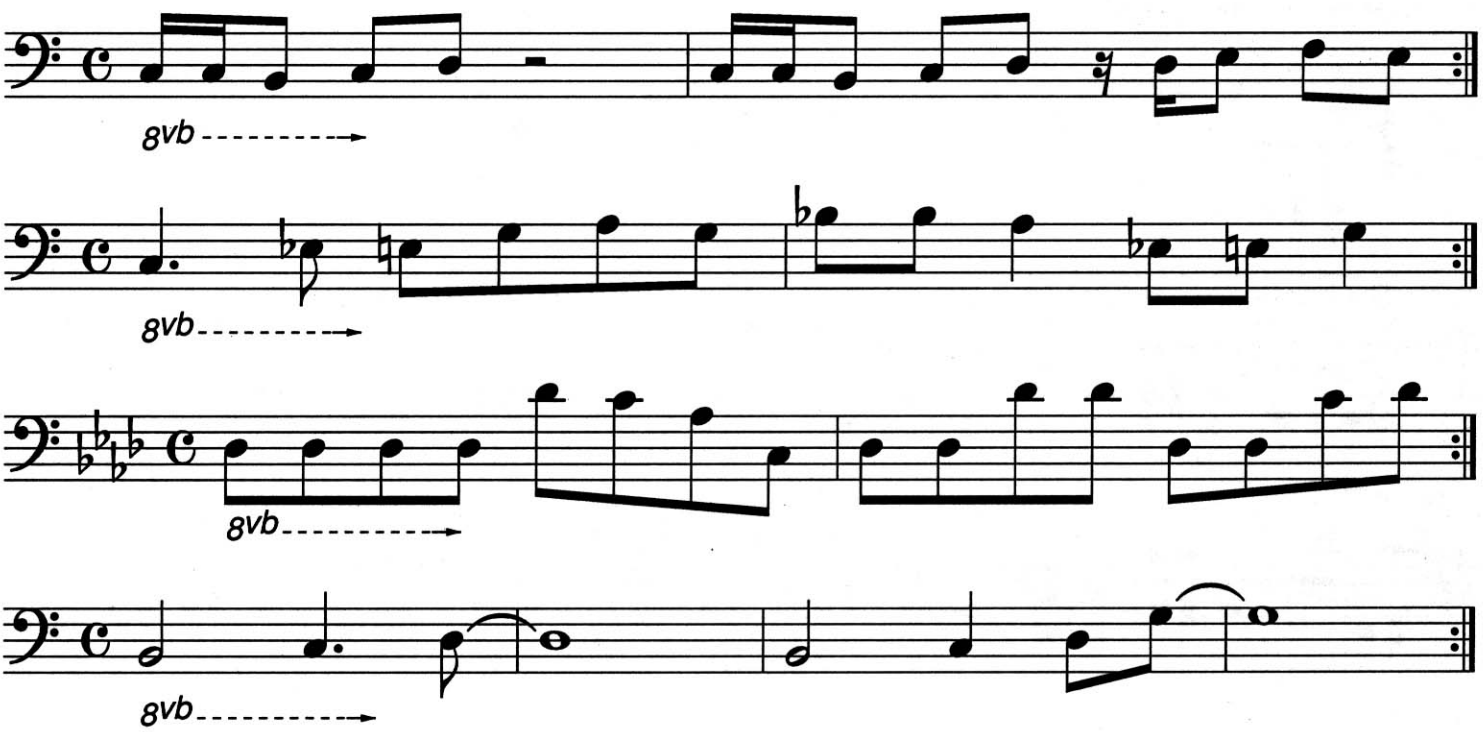



*For more on Hazard exercises, see *Rock Bass,* and *Advanced Rock Bass* by Steve Bailey.

***Exercise 5:*** Variations for Hazard #1.



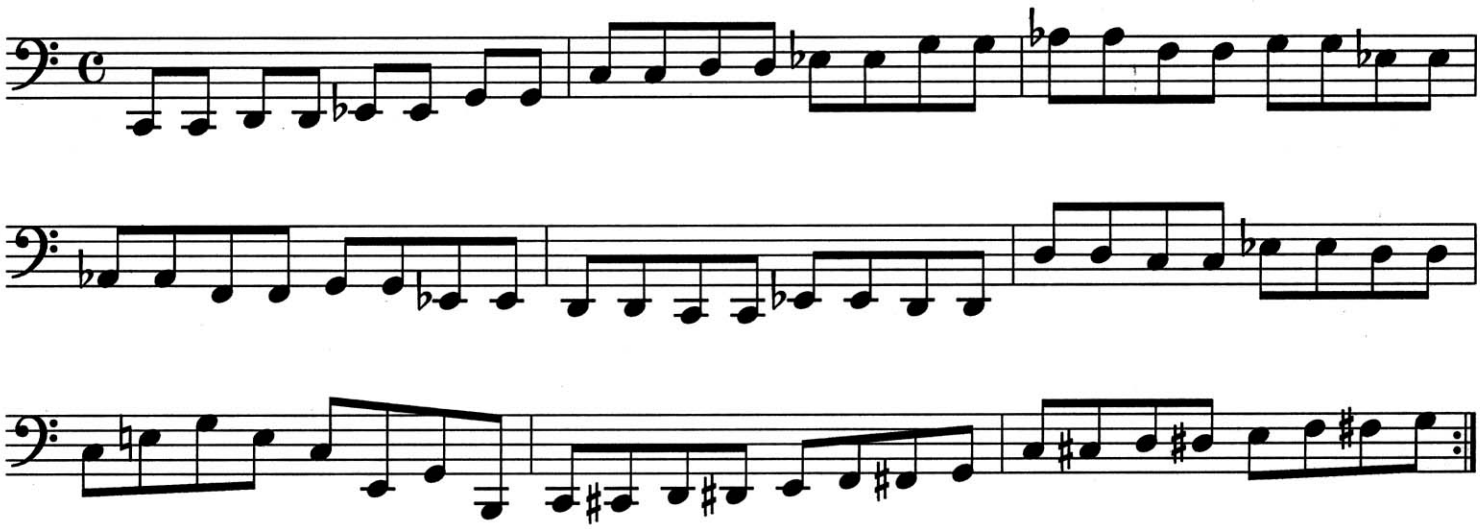

***Exercise 6:*** *8vb* Quite often you will see written parts that you will want to (or be asked to) take down an octave. Here are some reading exercises for you to take down. Play the notes short (staccato) and long (legato). Sooner or later you will be asked to double a synth. bass line. Practicing different articulations will make it easier for you to match the synth.'s phrasing and feel.



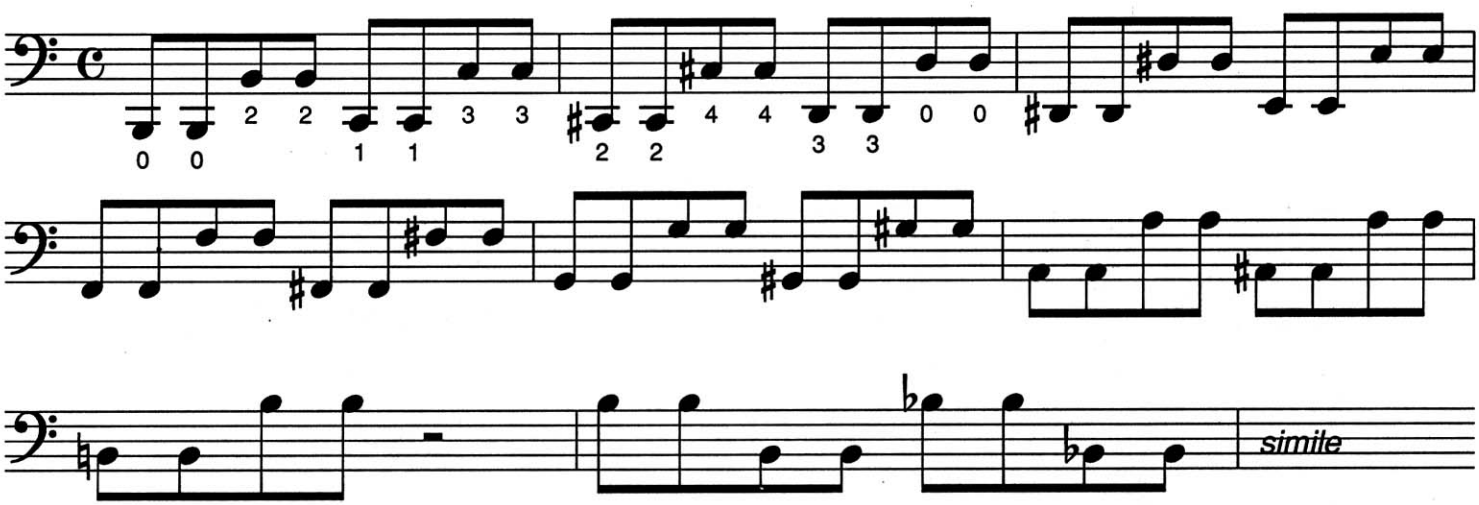
# UNIT THREE

## LARGER INTERVALS

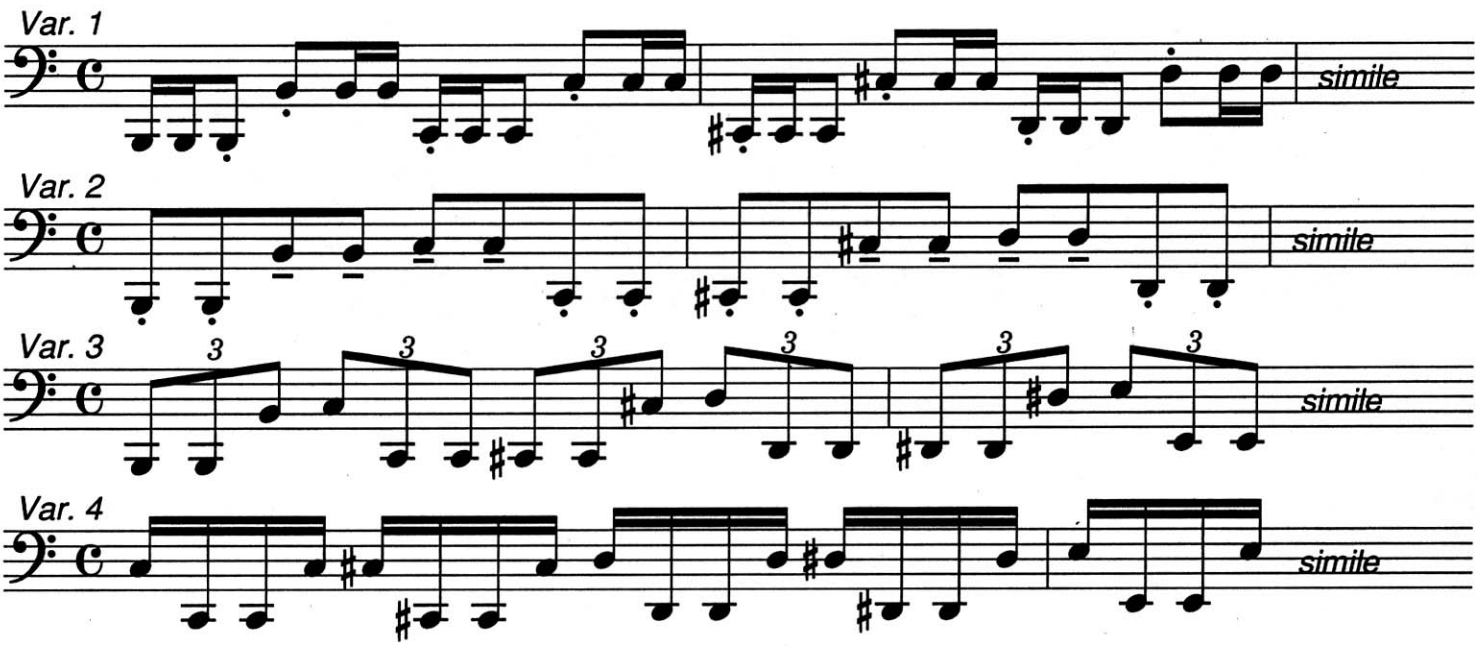
***Exercise 1:*** More skips in 1st position.



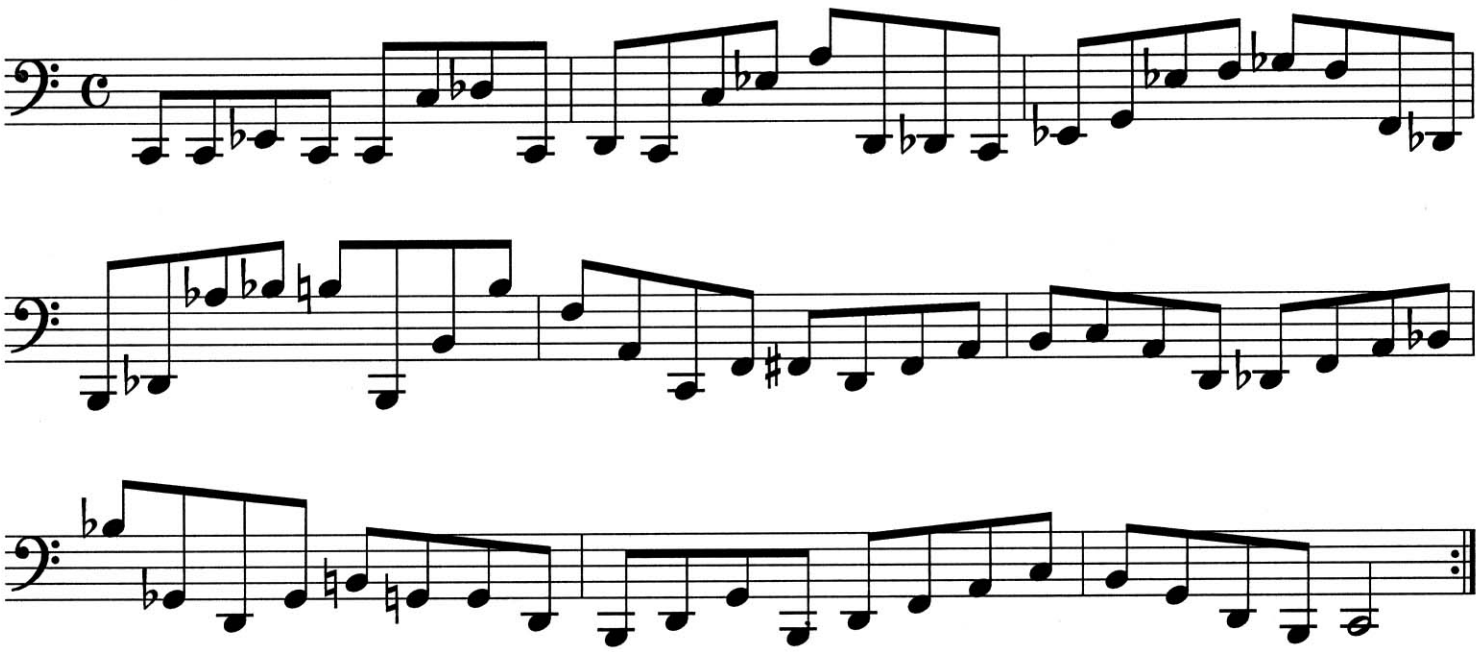
***Exercise 2:*** We're still in 1st position. Remember to stay on your fingertips and be articulate on the "B". The reason we're going all the way up to the "G" string is so you will relate better to the "B" in string spacing and crossing as well as pitch relativity. Make fingerings logical using 1 finger per fret.




***Exercise 3:*** Variations for #2.



***Exercise 4:*** Random note exercise in 1st position. These are very difficult to play clean, but very rewarding when done correctly.



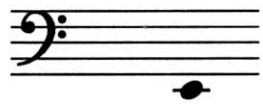
***NOTE:*** DON'T FORGET THAT METRONOME. PUT IT ON 2 & 4, OR JUST 4 AND FIND OUT HOW EVEN YOUR TIME IS.

# UNIT FOUR

## OTHER POSITIONS

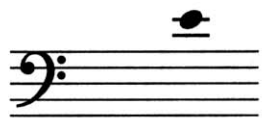
Let's start exploring other positions of the instrument. At the 5th fret the bass "starts all over". You have an "E" on the "B" string. It's like playing in 1st position on a four string bass from this point upward.

***EXAMPLE 4-1:***

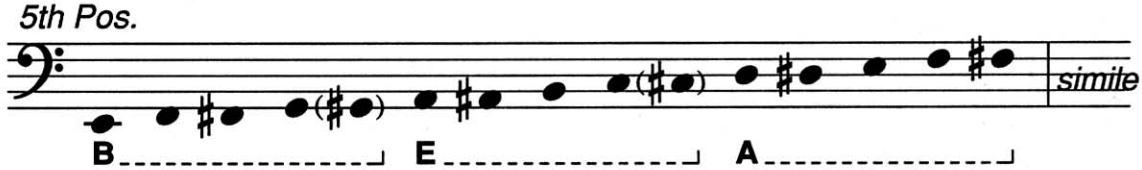


By now you should be fluid in the 1st position. Let's skip up to the 5th position. Your range is from the "E" in Example 4-1 up to the "E" in Example 4-2 (using extended fingering). It is crucial that you first become familiar with the notes of the "B" string.

***EXAMPLE 4-2:***



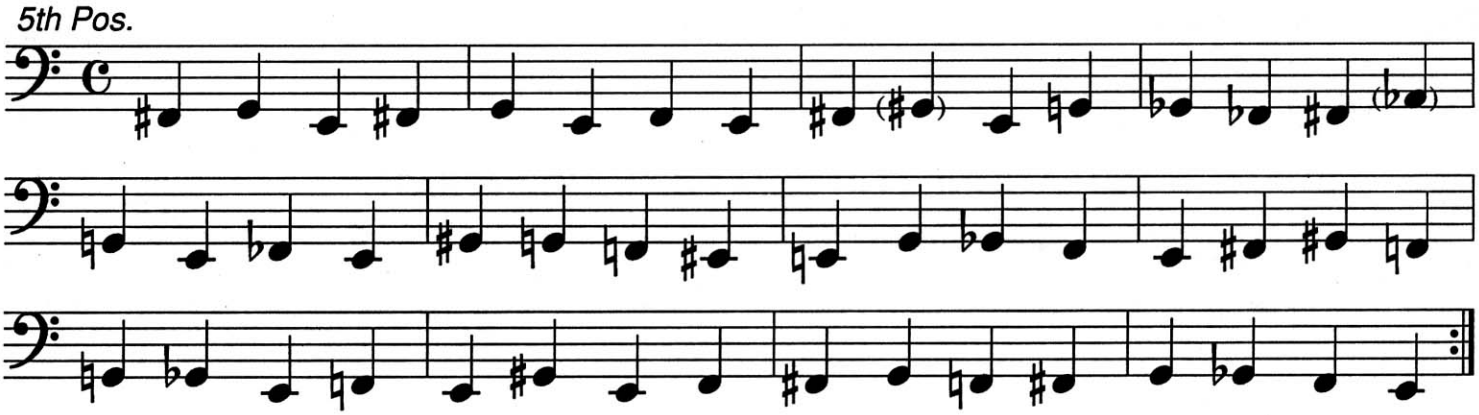
***EXAMPLE 4-3:***




Whether playing a part, reading, or improvising, it takes some discipline to begin using the "B" string in this register. As you will see, this application will make some hard things easy and some impossible things hard.

***EXAMPLE 4-4:***

"GETTING USED TO IT"




***NOTE:*** The notes in parenthesis will require an "extension" of your left hand. This concept will be explained in Unit #5. Your fingering will vary. Some of this is logical, some will require some weird shifts. The priority here is to learn the notes!!! It is sometimes good practice to verbally or mentally name the notes while you are playing them.

These are some simple scale patterns that will help in understanding this extended range.

***EXAMPLE 4-5:***

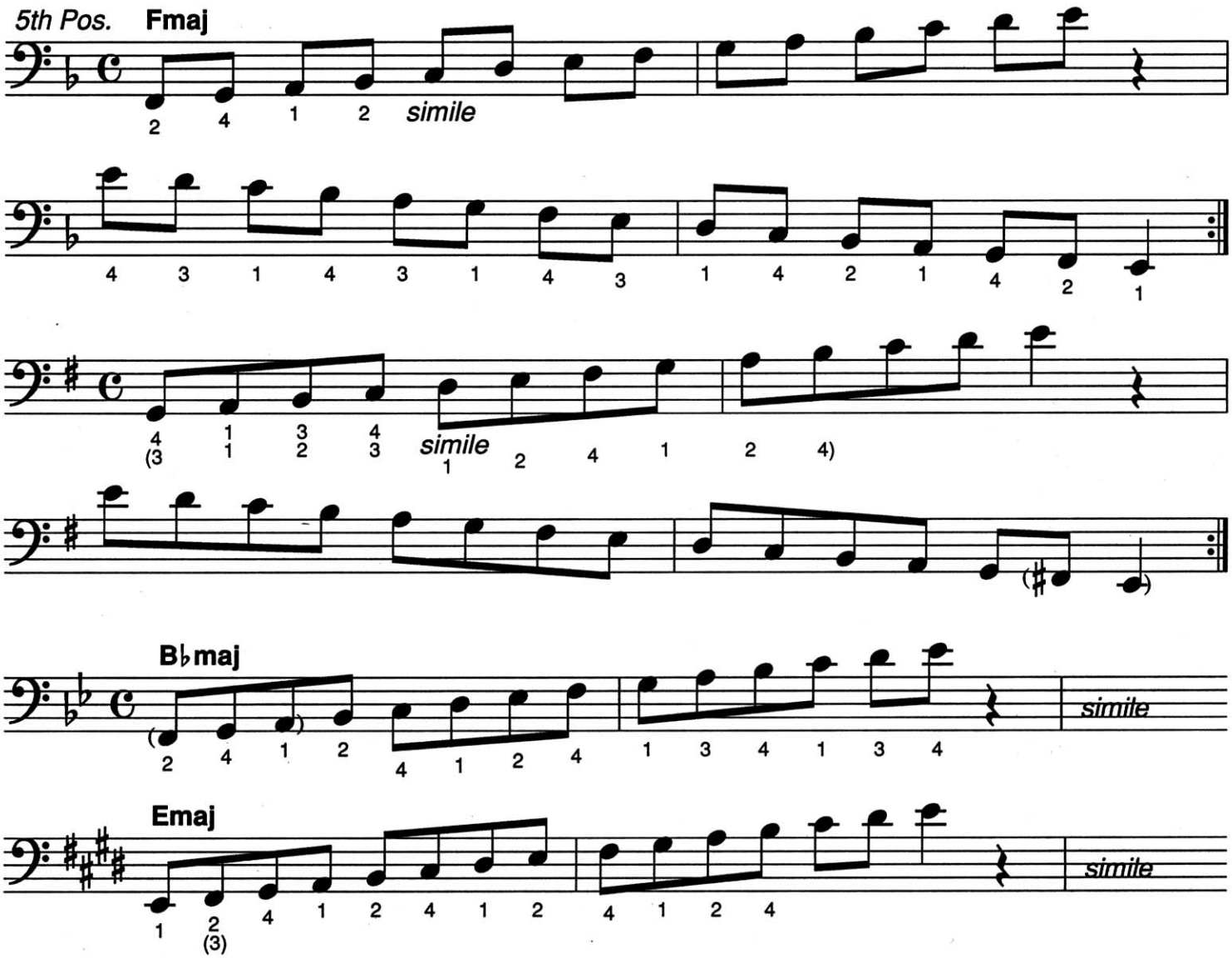
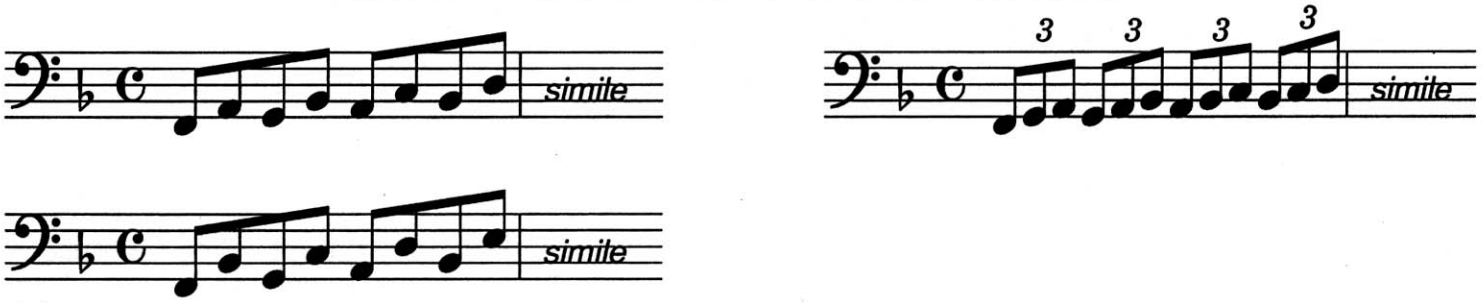



Figure out other scales in this position and then move around to 4th, 3rd, or 6th position and discover many new avenues

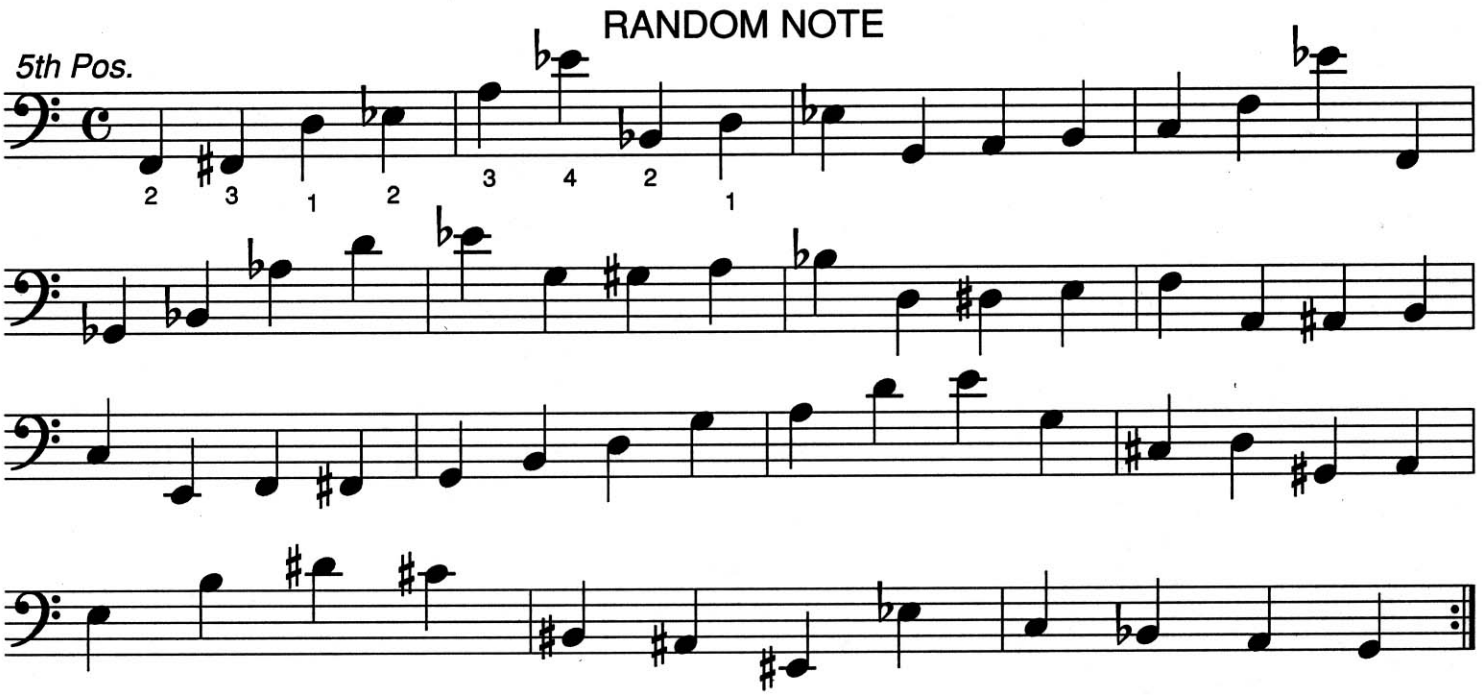
***EXAMPLE 4-6:***

VARIATIONS FOR SCALES. CONCENTRATE!!

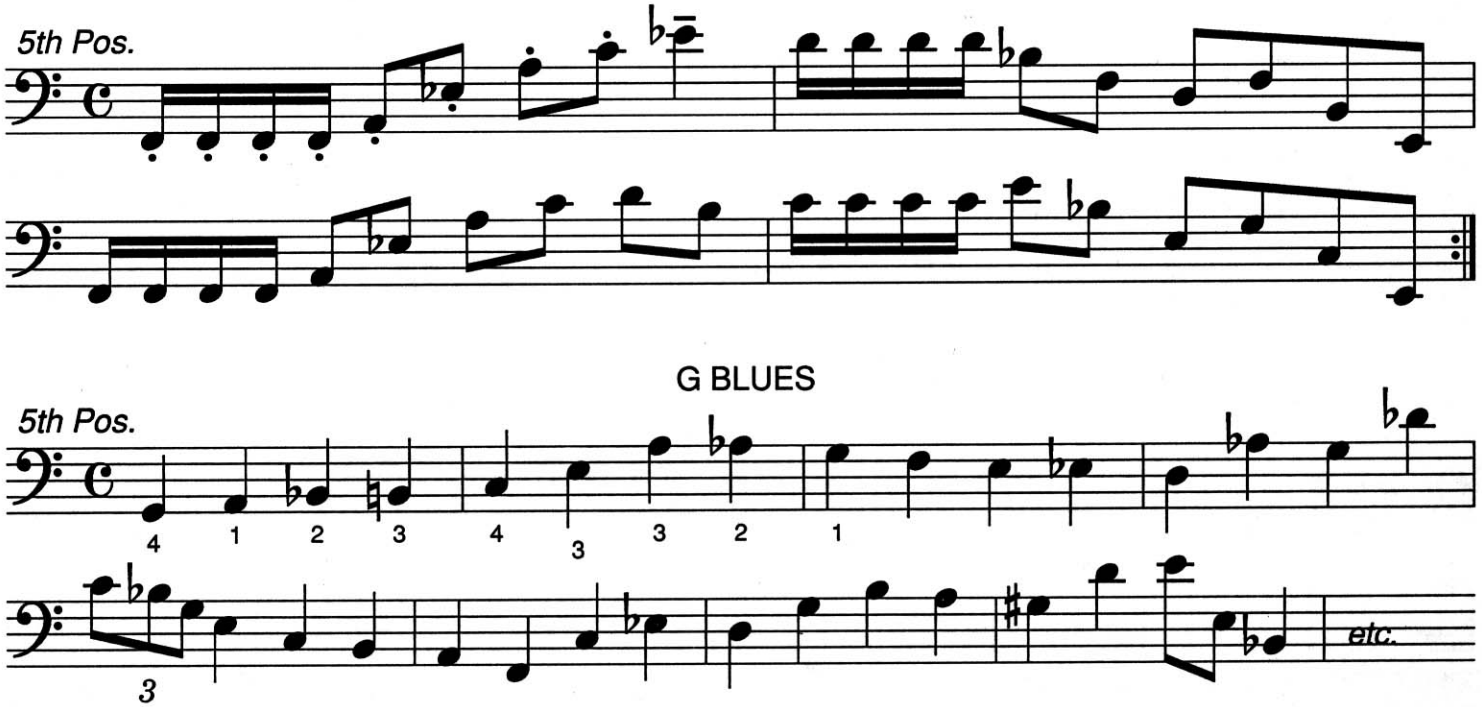



Make up your own variations and concentrate on your right hand as well!!!

***Exercise 1:*** Random note studies will help you find all the notes in a particular position as well as opening up new fingering possibilities.




***Exercise 2:*** Practical reading exercises like these become extremely playable with no shifting.

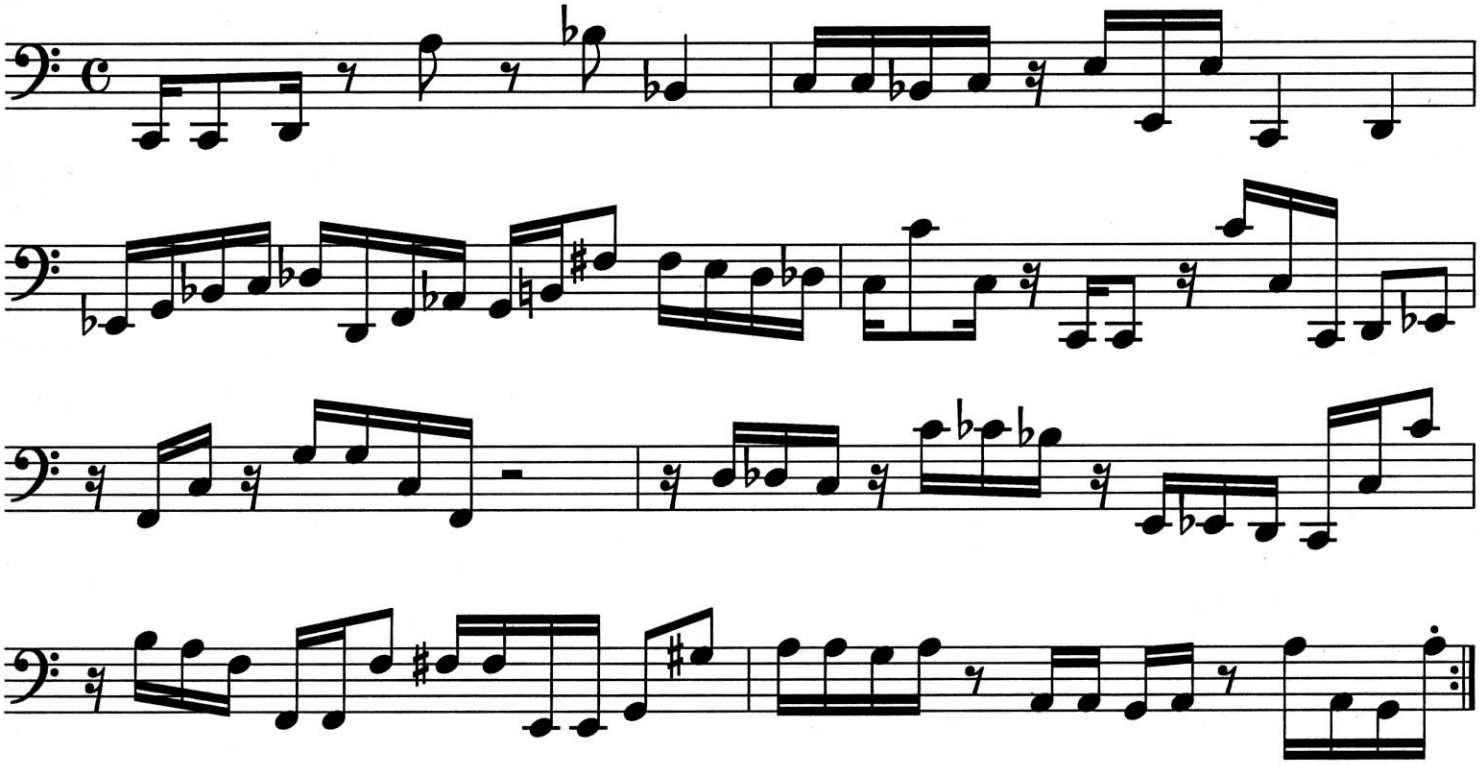



MAKE UP SOME ORIGINAL BASS LINES THAT REQUIRE YOU TO CROSS A LOT OF STRINGS. STAY IN ONE POSITION AND WRITE THEM OUT. If you really want a workout, pick a standard ("Stella by Starlight", "Misty" etc.) or a blues shuffle (like above) and walk a baseline through the changes staying in one position. When that gets easy, solo with the same concept.

# MORE RANDOM NOTE AND RHYTHM STUDIES

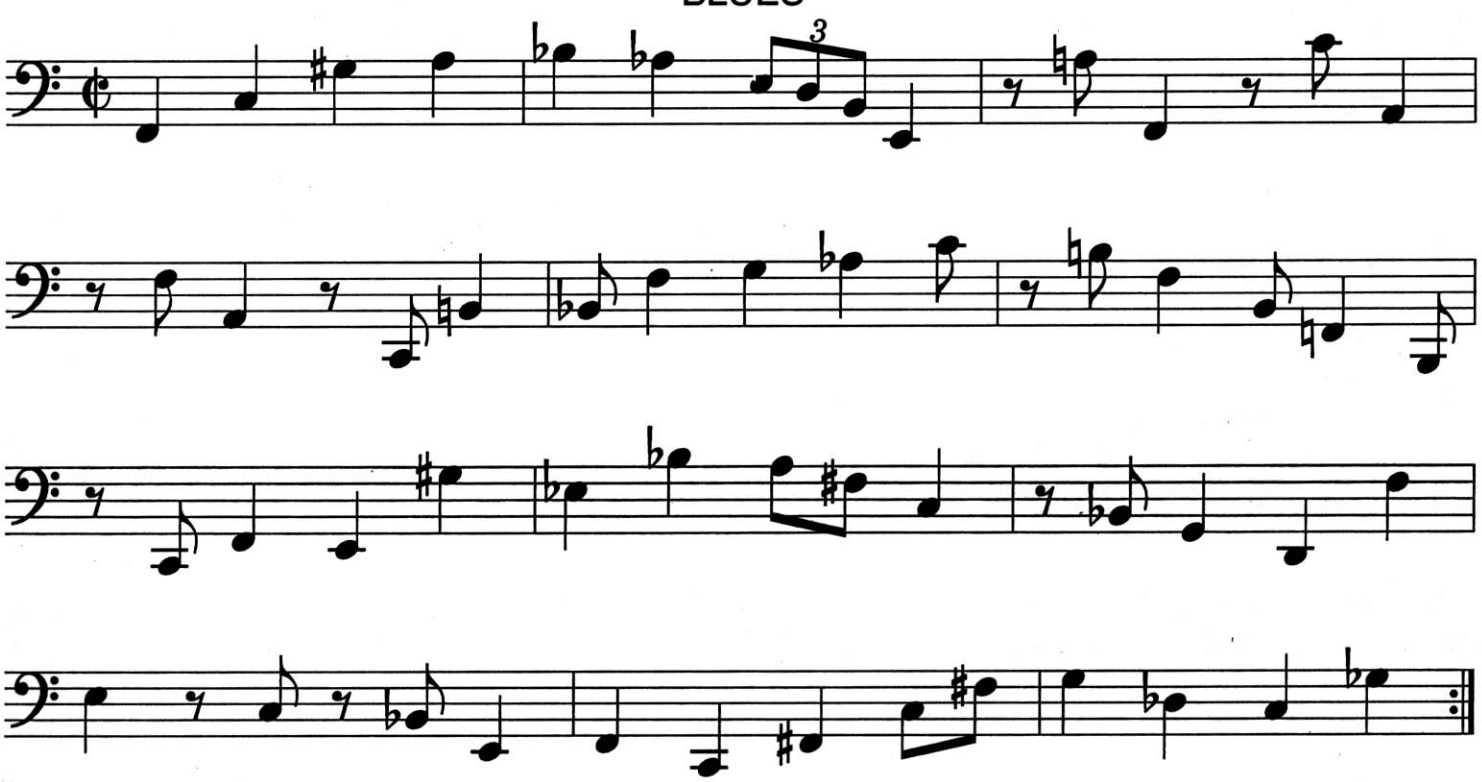
These are designed to familiarize yourself with tricky rhythms combined with wide intervals. Make your shifts smooth!!

***Exercise 3:***



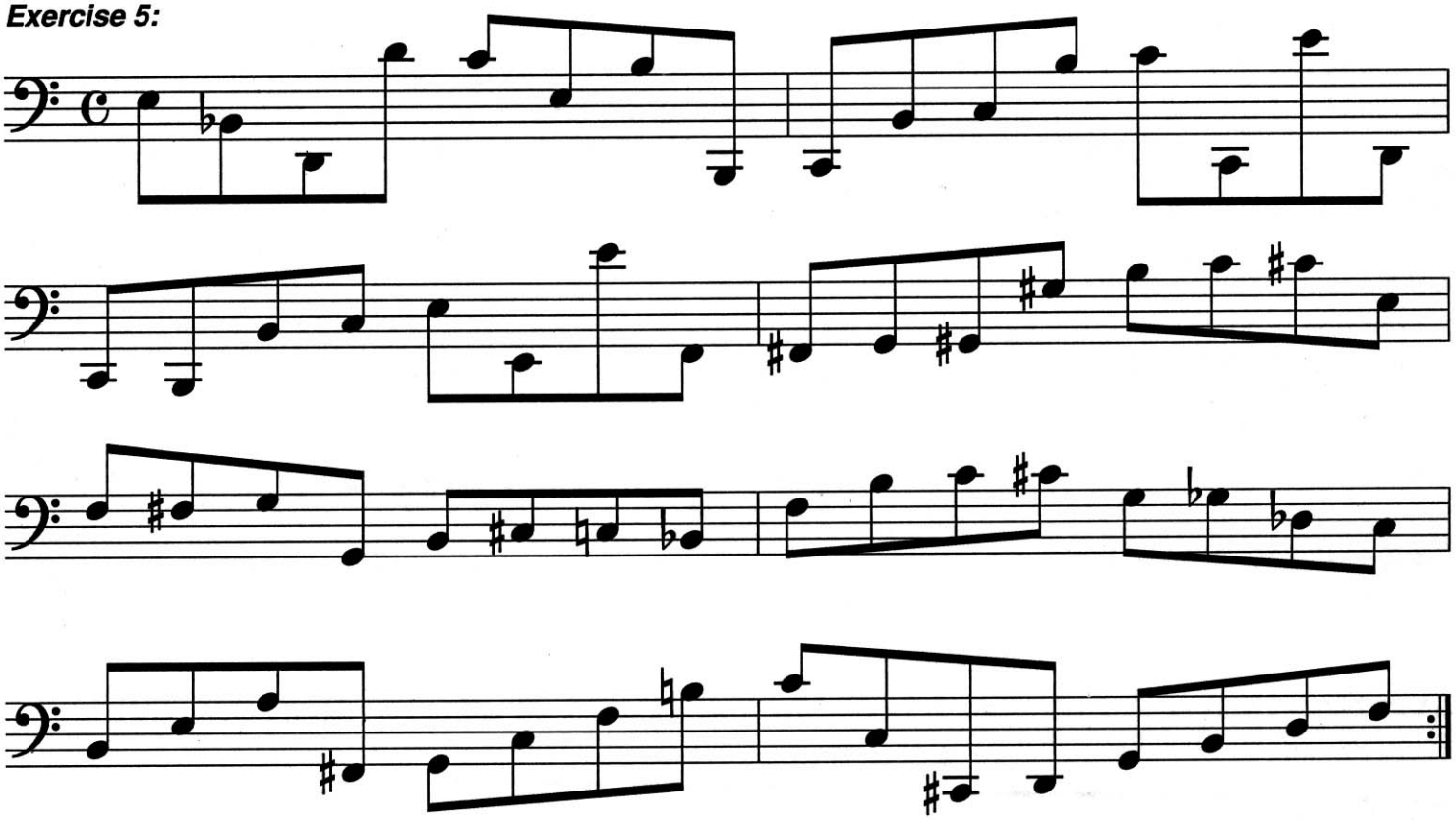
***Exercise 4:***

BLUES

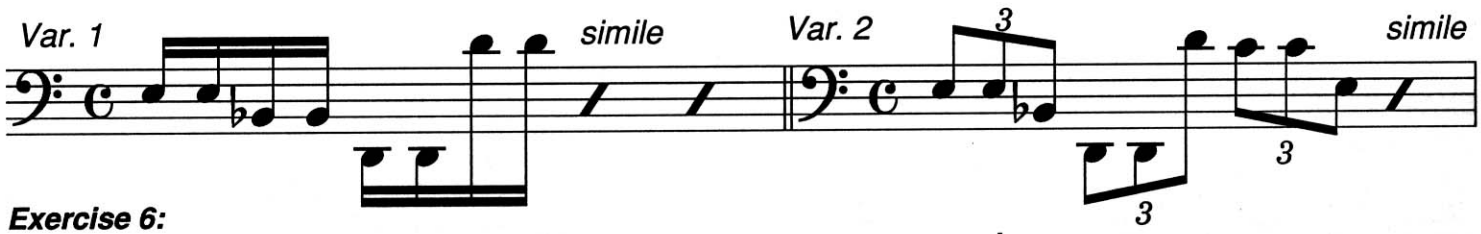


## "WIDE" RANDOM NOTE

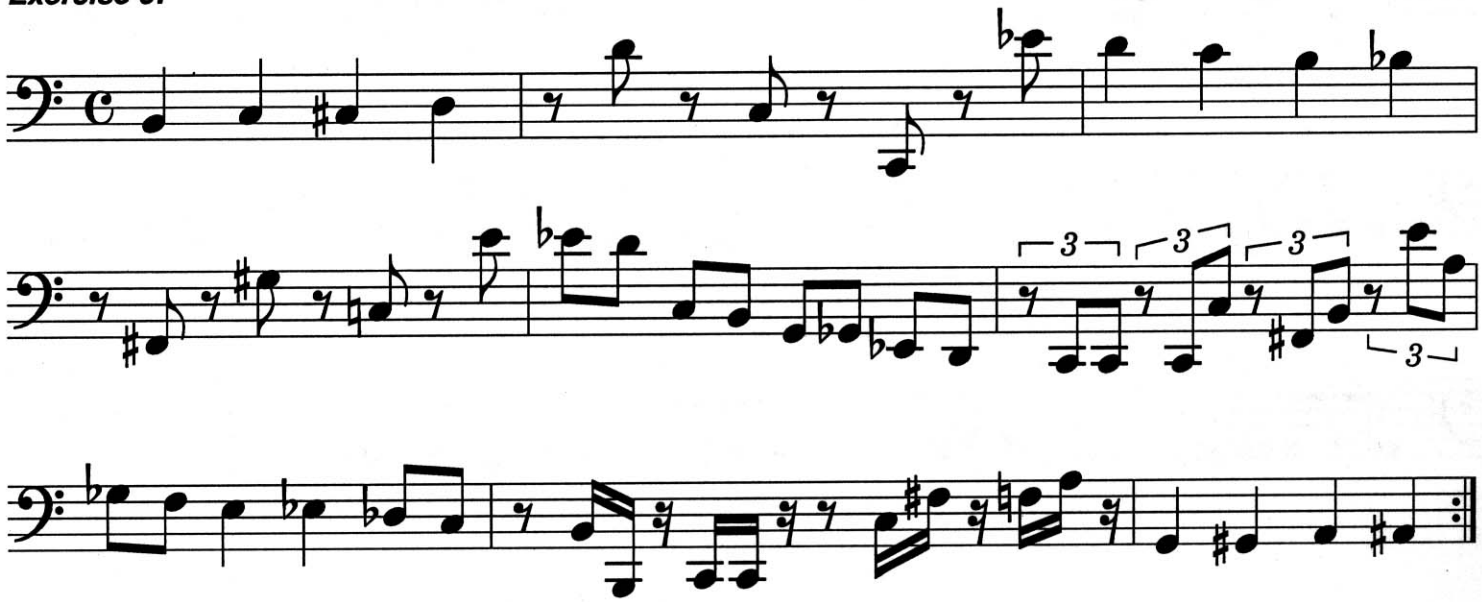
***Exercise 5:***



## VARIATIONS




***Exercise 6:***




Play this with even and odd eighths. Make sure your 16ths fit.

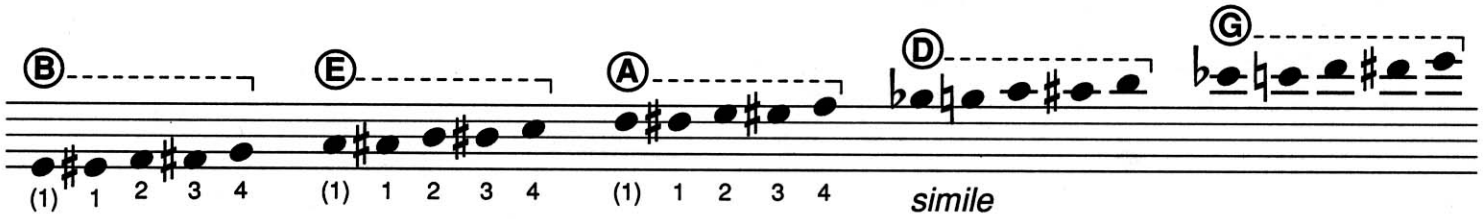
# UNIT FIVE

## SCALES WITH EXTENSIONS

Before we dive into chords and *really* hard stuff, let's get the fingerboard completely out of the way. Remember, there are 12 different positions (starts over at the octave) which means 12 different points to reference from. I have (for brevity's sake) divided the fingerboard into 3 general areas (1st position, 5th, and now 8th-10th position). *All positions in between are still there for you to study.* Play all the scale exercises in every position to really know the fingerboard.

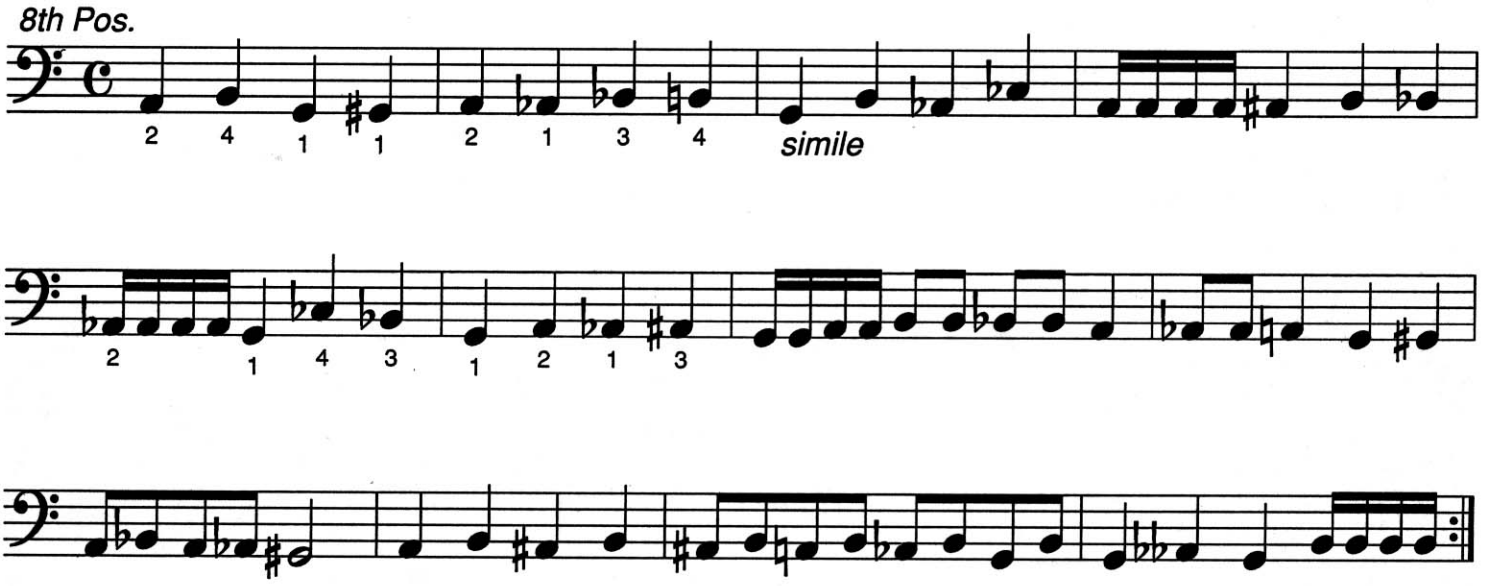
### *I. 8th position (extended):*

Extension refers to "fielding" 2 frets with the 1st finger, making our range 5 frets (instead of 4). This will bring us back up to the octave. Most hands are large enough for this extension this high on the fingerboard.

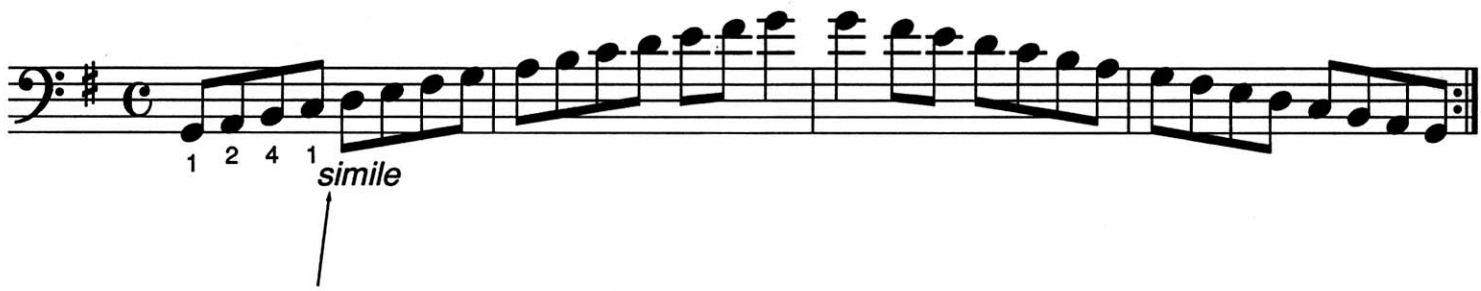



A very handy 2 octave chromatic scale in 1st position. This is just 3 notes shy of the complete range of a 4-string bass from bottom (E) to the 12th fret (G)!!!

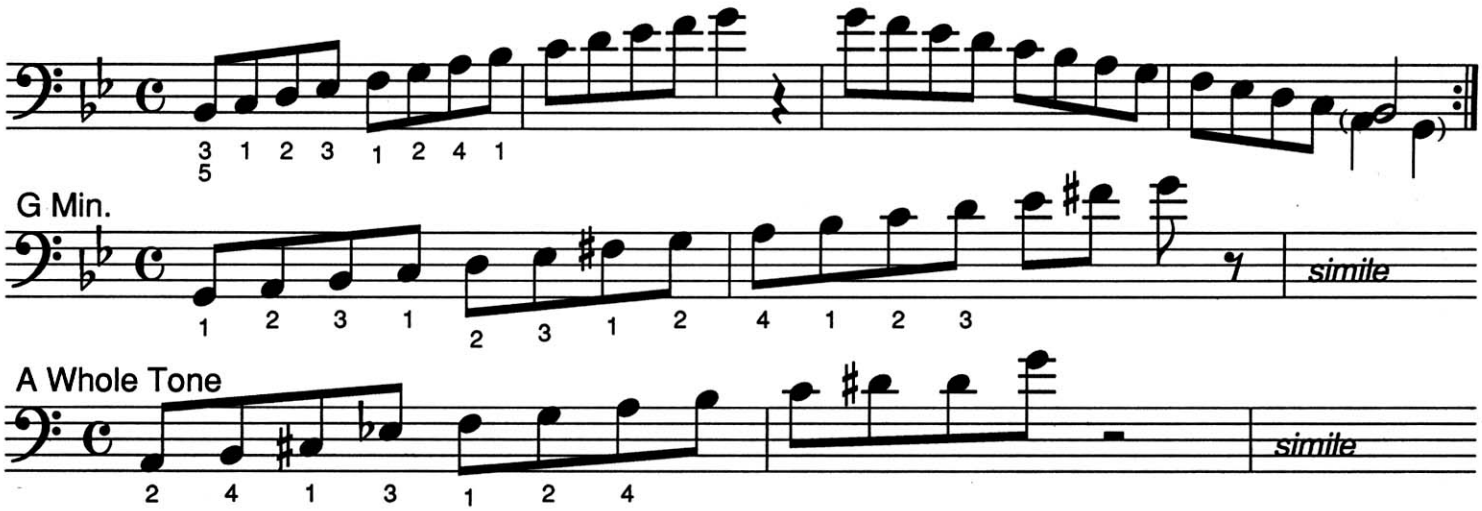
***EXAMPLE 5-1:***



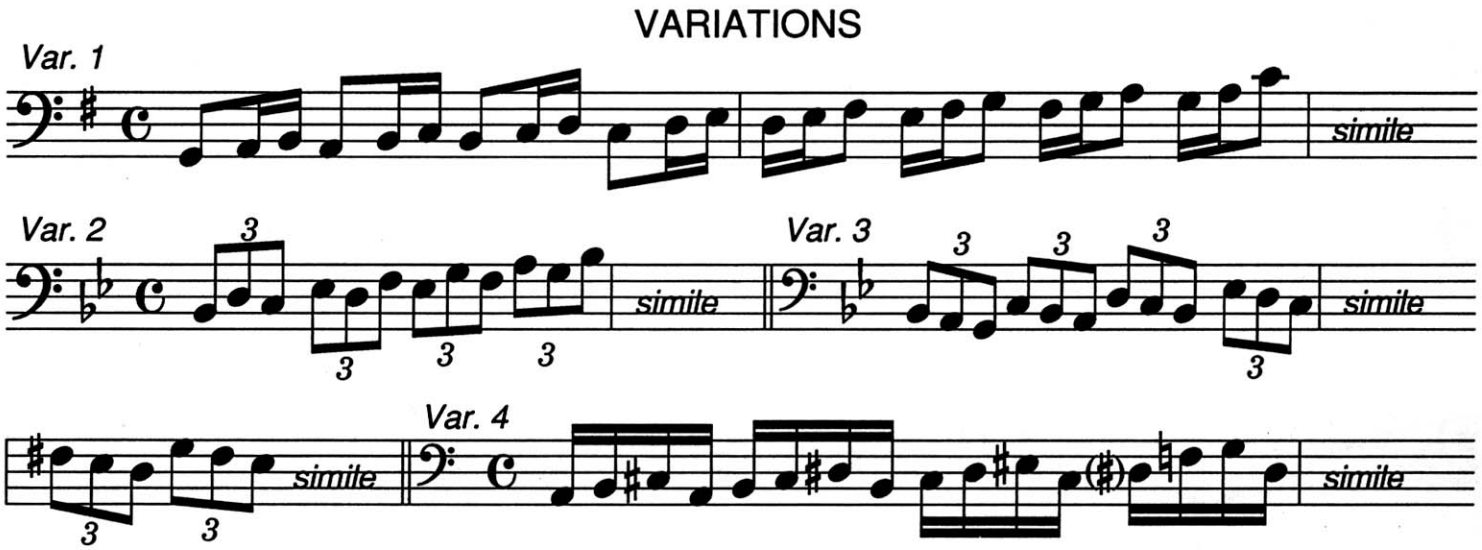
***Exercise 1:*** These are to be played in the 8th position. Don't just play a pattern. Know the notes you are playing. To test yourself, arbitrarily stop anywhere in the exercise and name the note under your finger.



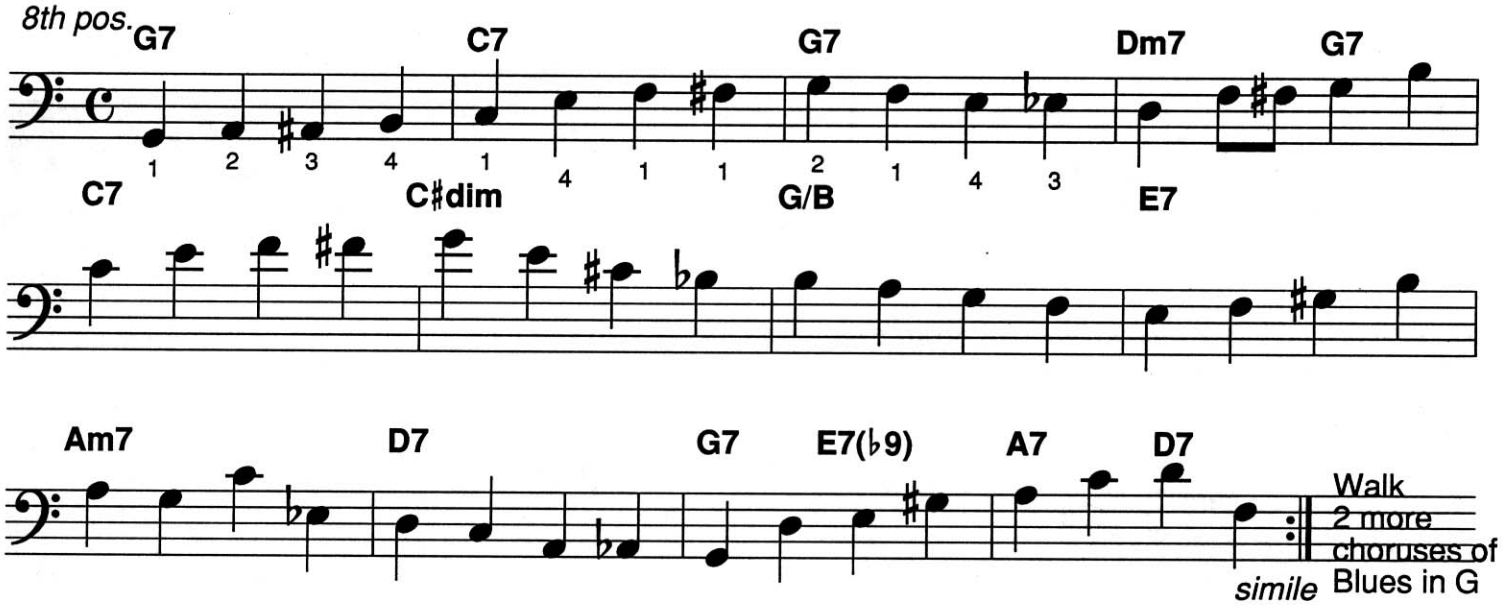

***NOTE:*** Be aware that this is also **A DORIAN** from "A" to "G", **B PHRYGIAN** from "B" to "G", etc. (A great book on scales & modes is *Scales for Jazz Improvisation* by Dan Haerle). Check it out.



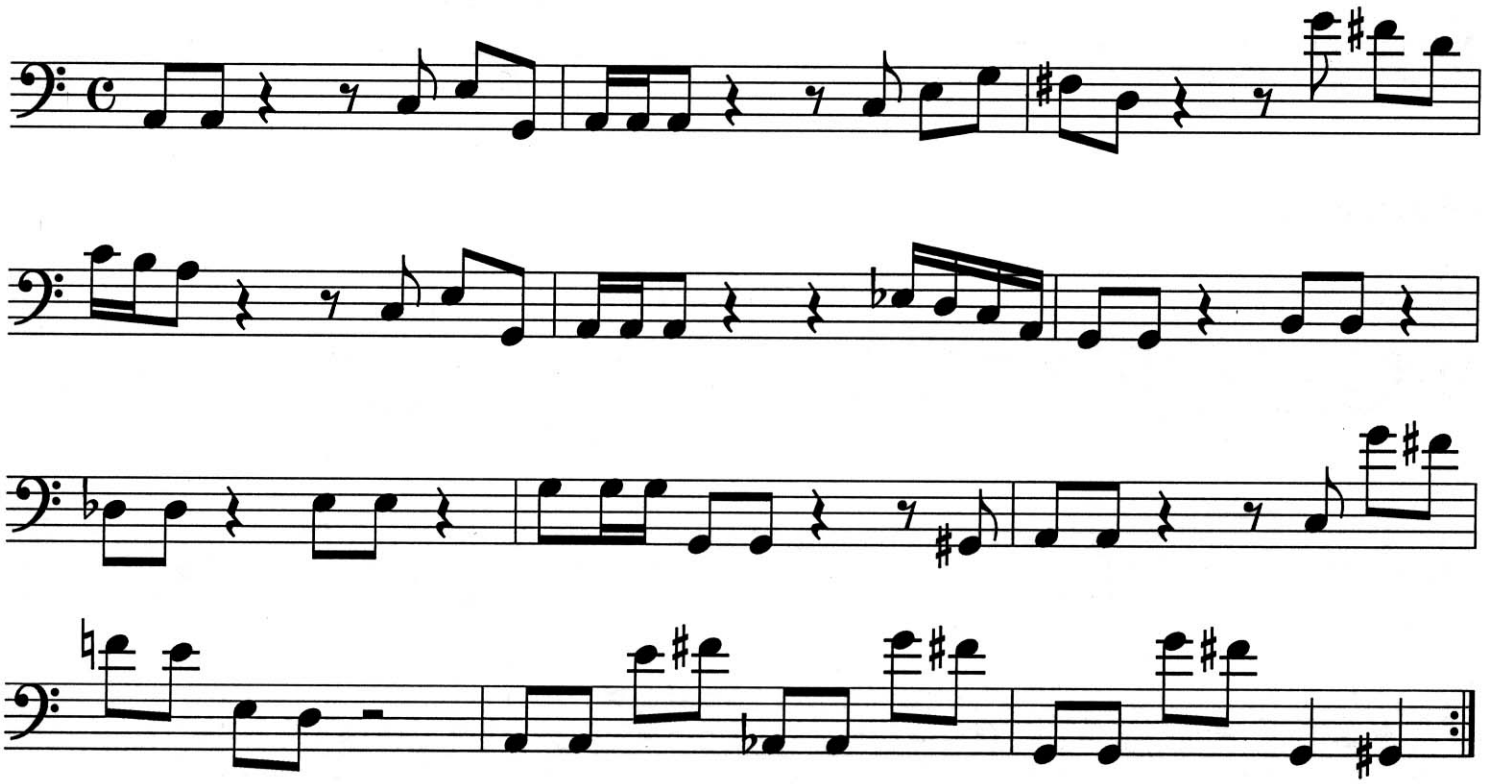

***EXAMPLE 5-2:***



***Exercise 2:*** Go through the cycle of 5ths (B♭, E♭, A♭, D♭, etc.) and play as much of each scale that fits in this position. We will come up with many different fingerings and patterns, not to mention a much greater understanding of this "no man's land".



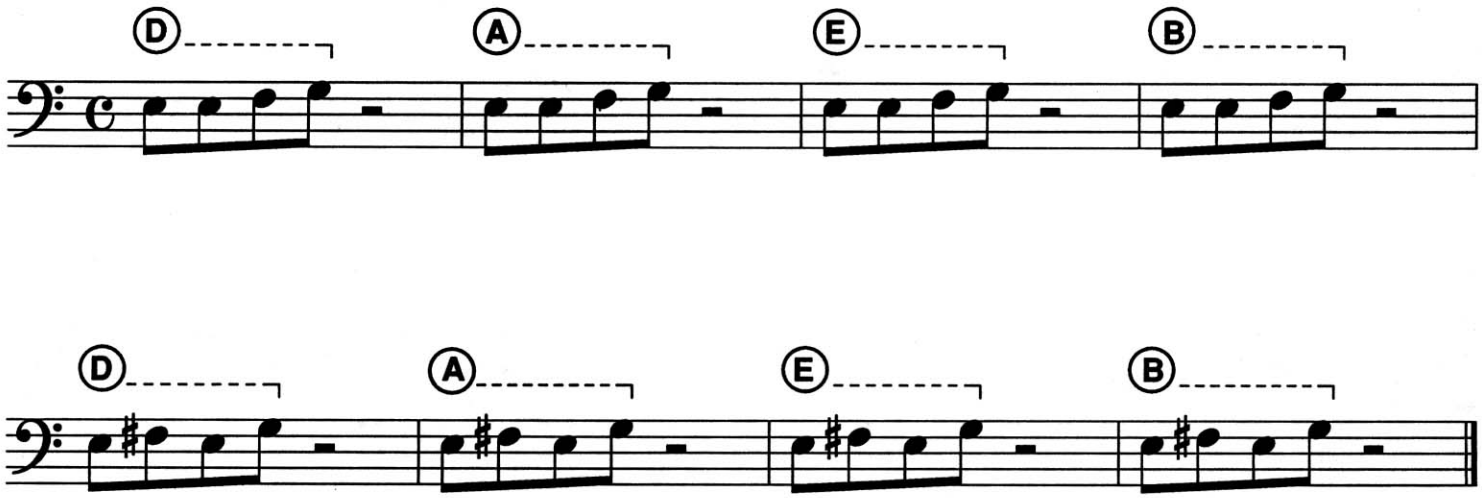

***Exercise 3:*** All this in 8th position. Go for clean articulation on the "B" string. Get your mind used to recognizing the range of what you're going to read and find the optimum position. As you are reading, scan ahead.



It would be advisable to become familiar with the treble clef if you're not already. This opens up alot of avenues for reading. You can have lots of fun reading music written for flute, sax, trumpet, etc. You will find intervals and patterns not normally associated with "Bass" music.

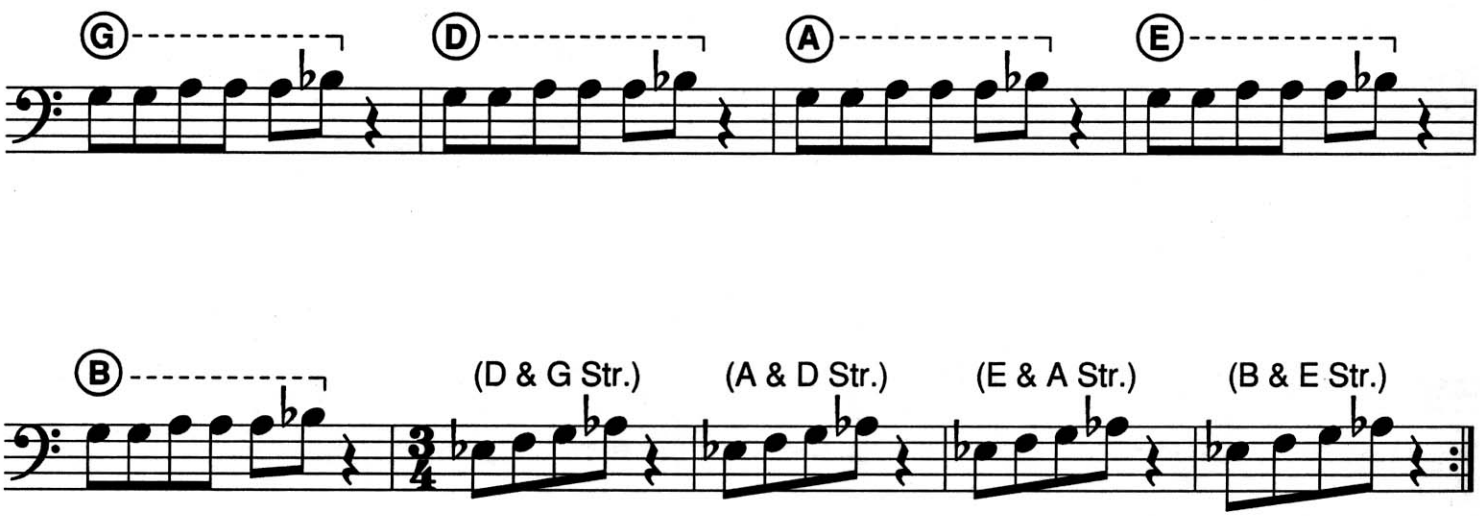
# UNIT SIX
## MOBILITY EXERCISES

***Exercise 1:*** The concept is simple. A short riff will be played in as many positions as possible. The rests get shorter as we go.

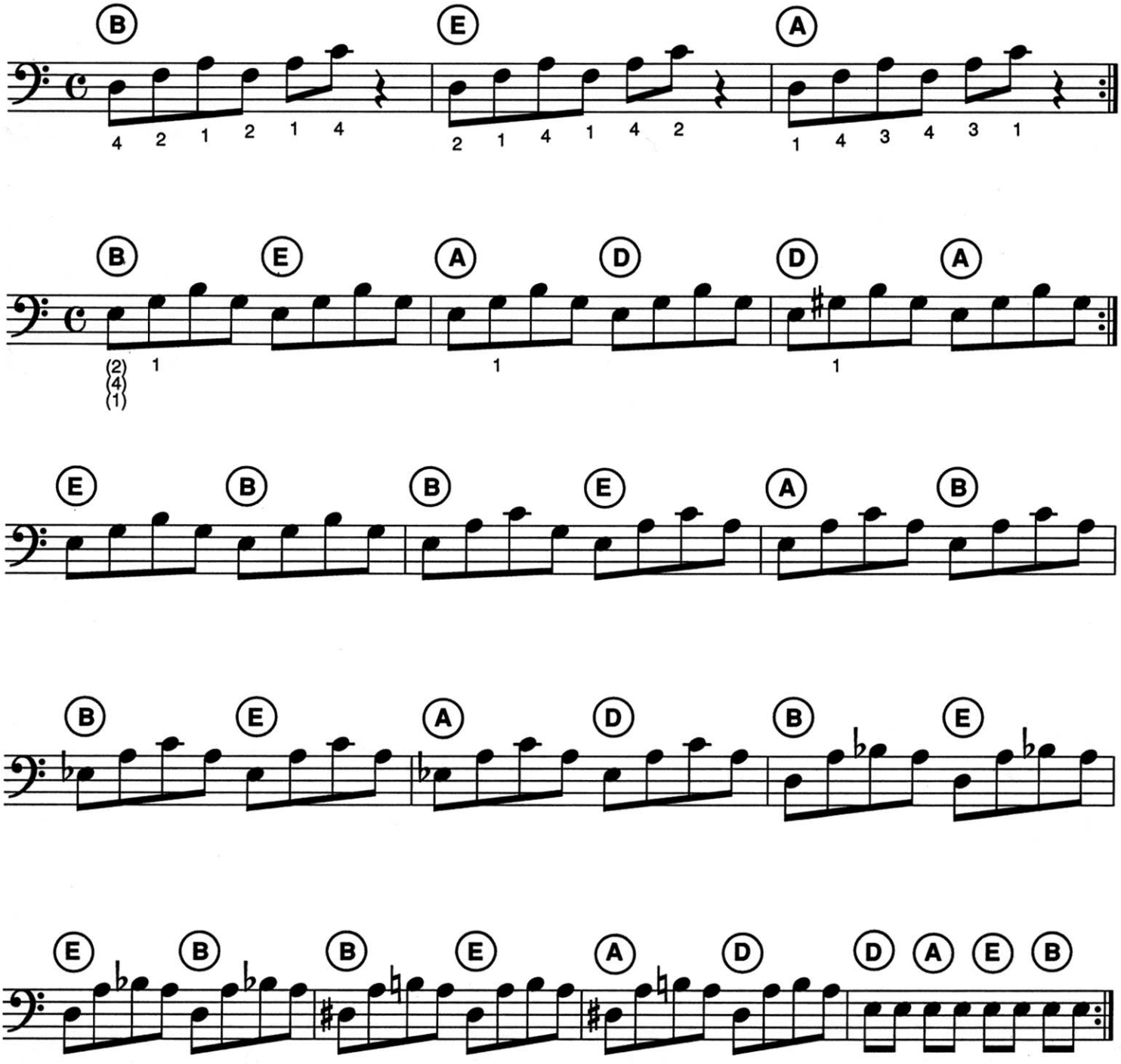



Notice timbre or tonal differences of each string. Quite often a producer will ask for a darker or brighter sound. Occasionally, transposing the part to a different string will bring about the necessary change.

***Exercise 2:*** Same as exercise 1.



***Exercise 3:*** Start on "B" string and vary fingerings, just don't repeat on same string. Start slow. Your goal is to play it smoothly!!! Shift as quickly as possible. Ideally your shifts should be silent. (A string name over the first note of each sequence indicates where the pattern starts. Stay in position for each sequence.

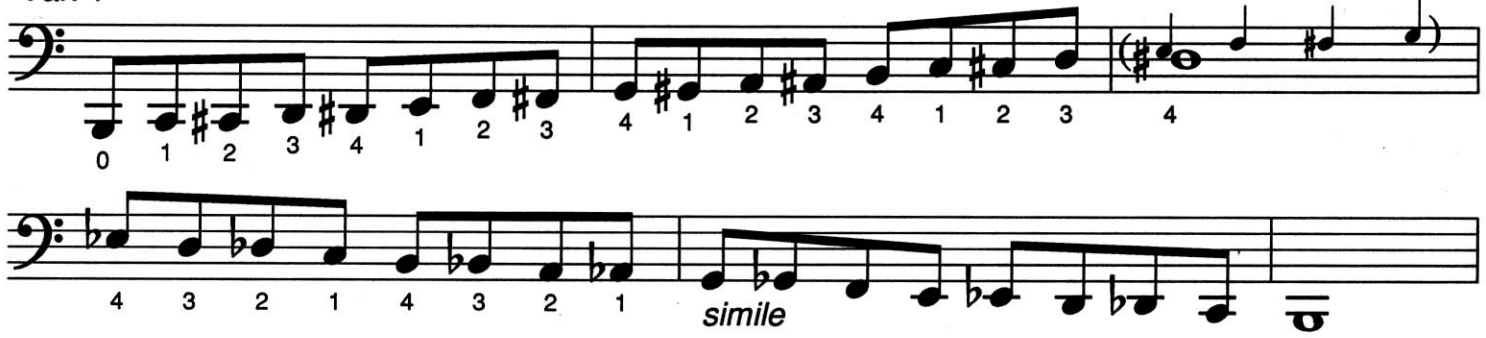



If you master this exercise using 2 or 3 different fingerings per sequence, you have done extremely well. Instant practical fingerings will begin to manifest themselves in your reading and improvising.

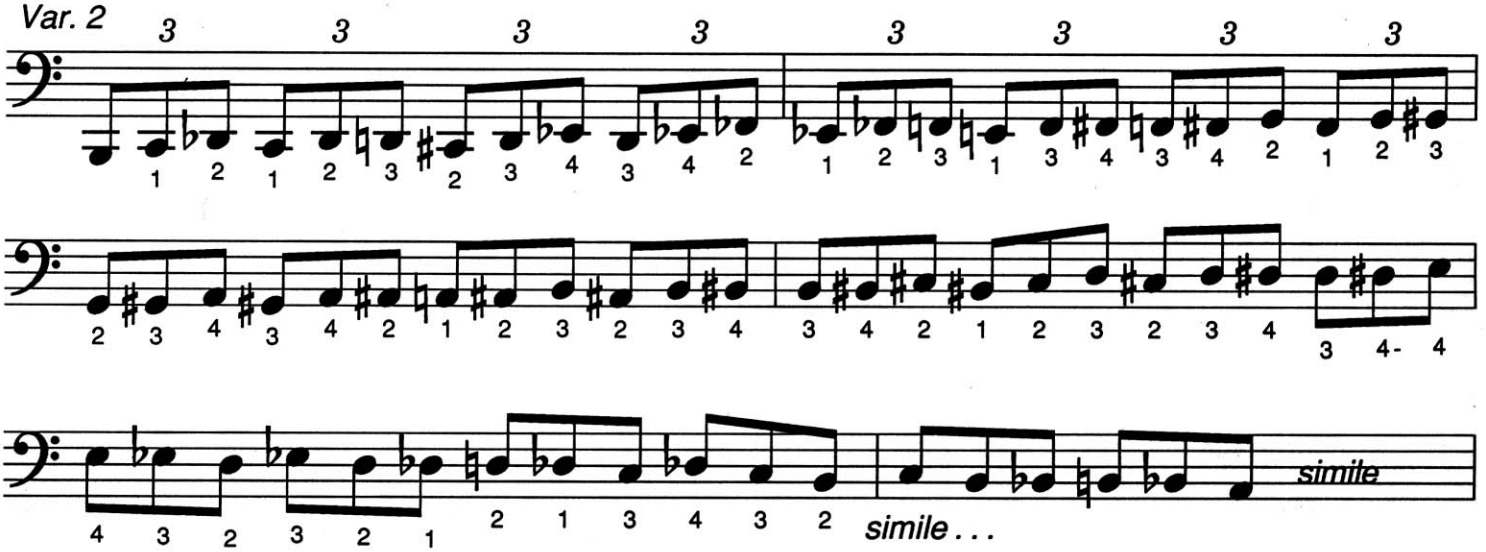
***Exercise 4:*** This is simply a chromatic scale. It must be played on the "B" string with smooth shifts. At any moment stop yourself and name the note under your finger. Eventually play it with your eyes closed!!!

## CHROMATIC

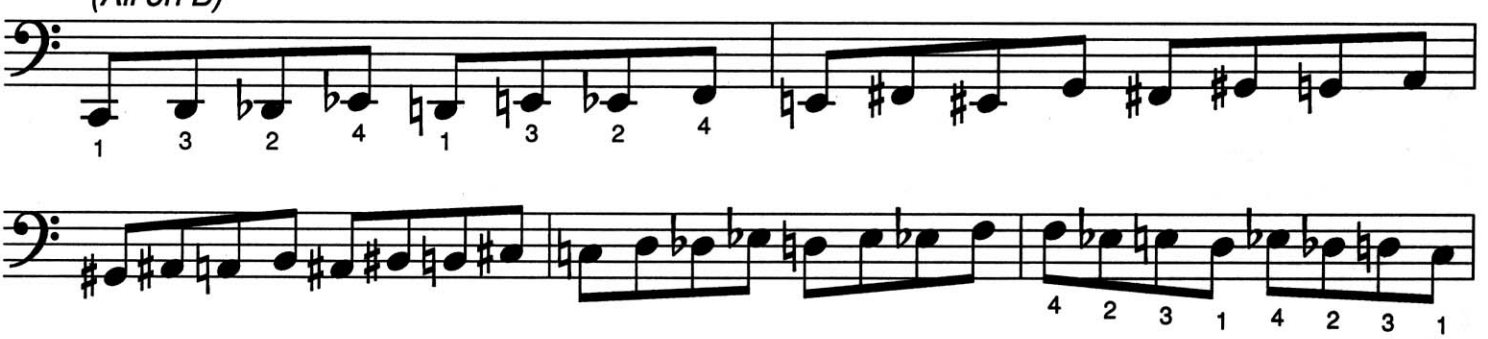
*Var. 1*



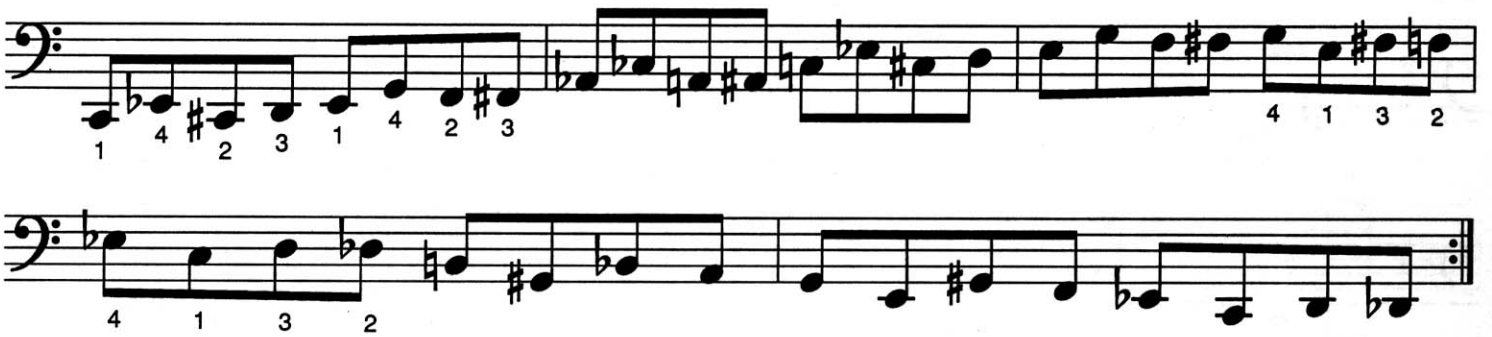

*Var. 2*




*Var. 3*
*(All on B)*



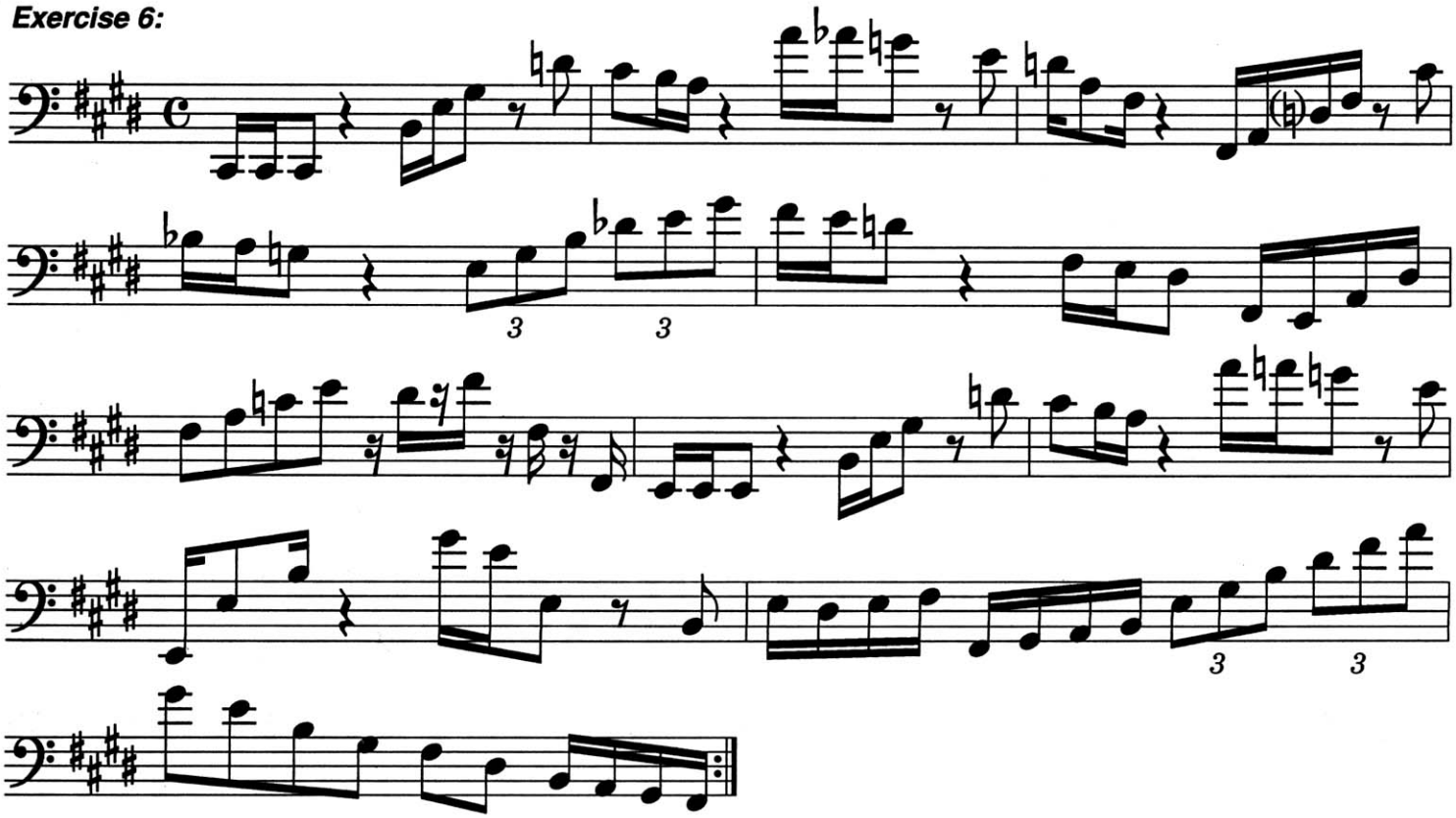
***Exercise 5:*** Know the notes!!! Stop at any time and name it!!! Play on your fingertips. Smoothly and accurately.



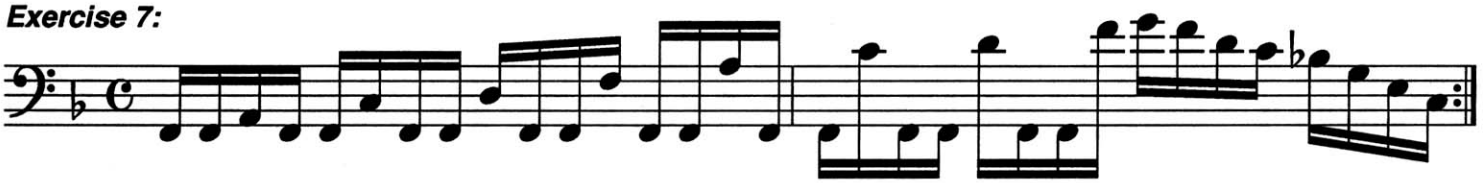
## RANDOM NOTE AND SHIFTING EXERCISES

These random note studies will fit in the 5th and 8th pos. on both 5 string, and 4 string bass. GOOD LUCK!

***Exercise 6:***



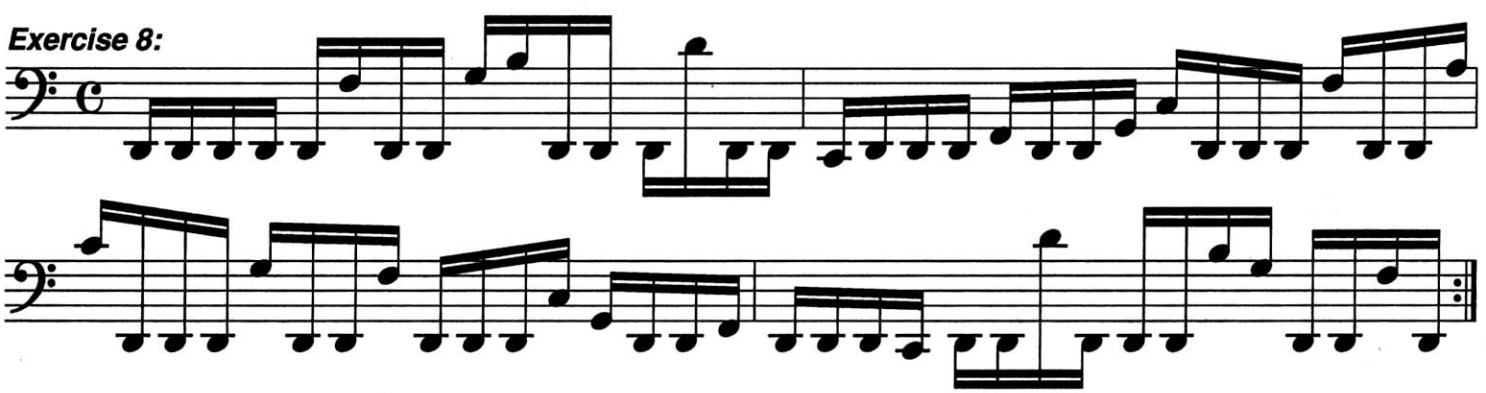
***Exercise 7:***



## 5 STRING CROSSING AND SHIFTING

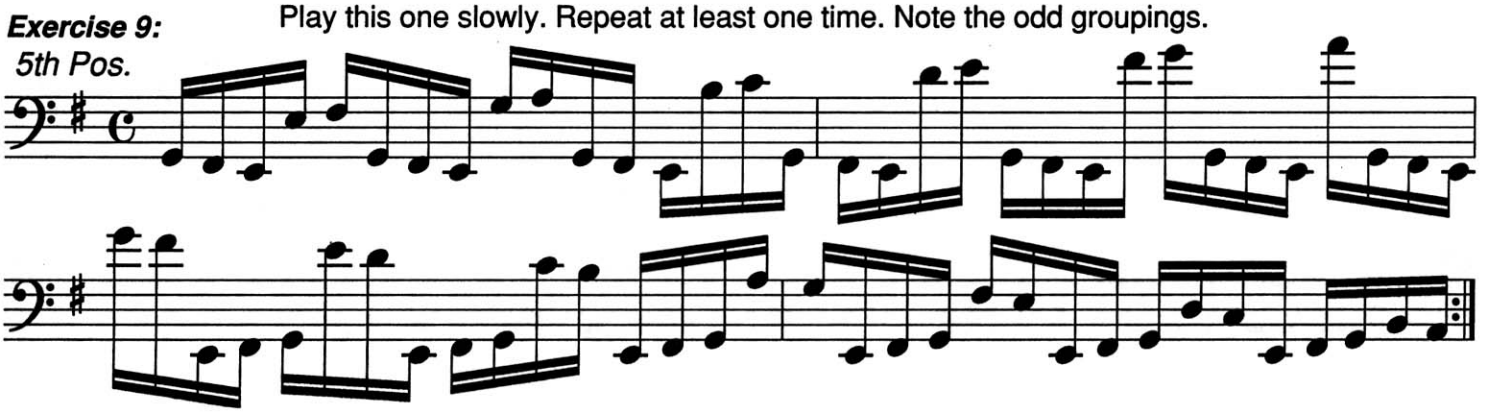
Make the "Ds" (on the B string) even with the skip notes. This requires some extreme right hand discipline.

***Exercise 8:***



***Exercise 9:*** Play this one slowly. Repeat at least one time. Note the odd groupings.

*5th Pos.*



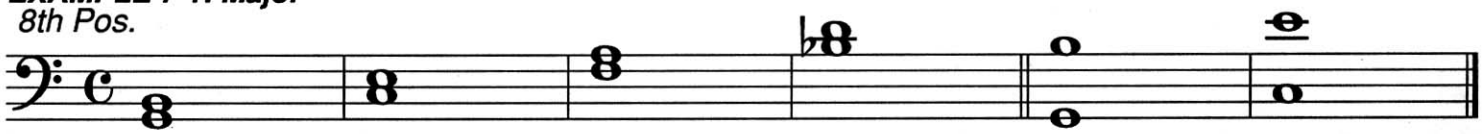
# UNIT SEVEN

## CHORD VOICINGS

New possibilities for chord voicings are a "fringe benefit" of the five string. For clarity, I'll assume you know very little about chord voicings, so I'll explain them accordingly. Starting with 3rds and 10ths, we'll add intervals and voice chord progressions as well as explain how to use them in group and solo contexts. The "B" string gives us 4 sets of "vertical" 3rds, or 2 sets of vertical 10ths. By vertical, I mean stacked on top of each other in 4ths.

***EXAMPLE 7-1: Major***

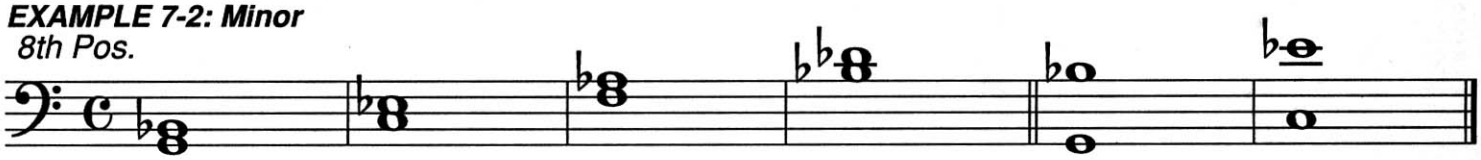
*8th Pos.*



The 10ths are particularly useful in rounding out voicings. Instead of just defining the root or tonal center, it enables us to define quality (major or minor) of the chord.

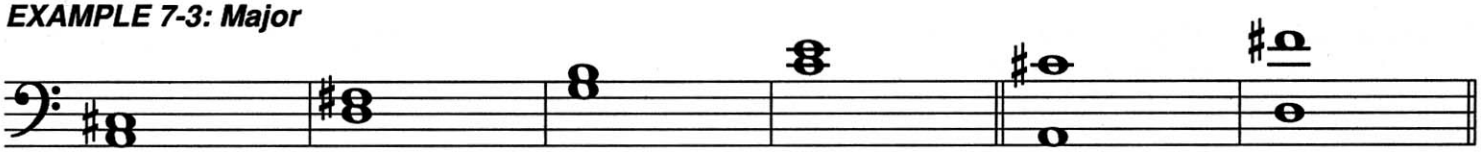
***EXAMPLE 7-2: Minor***

*8th Pos.*



As there are many different ways to finger 10ths, I'll trust your logical judgement on whether to use (1-2), (1-3), (2-3), (2-4), etc. . .

***EXAMPLE 7-3: Major***

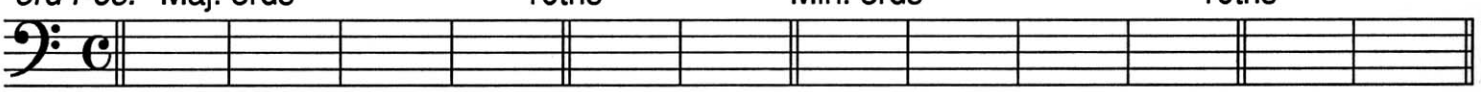


***Exercise 1:*** Write out the appropriate sets of 3rds and 10ths for the given position. Some of the lower thirds are non-functional in a chord, but it is good to know for arpeggios and "stuff".

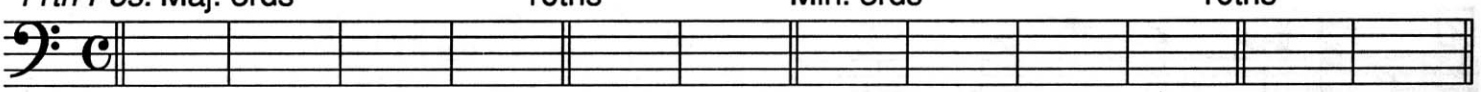
*4th Pos.* Maj. 3rds 10ths

*15th Pos.* Min. 3rds 10ths

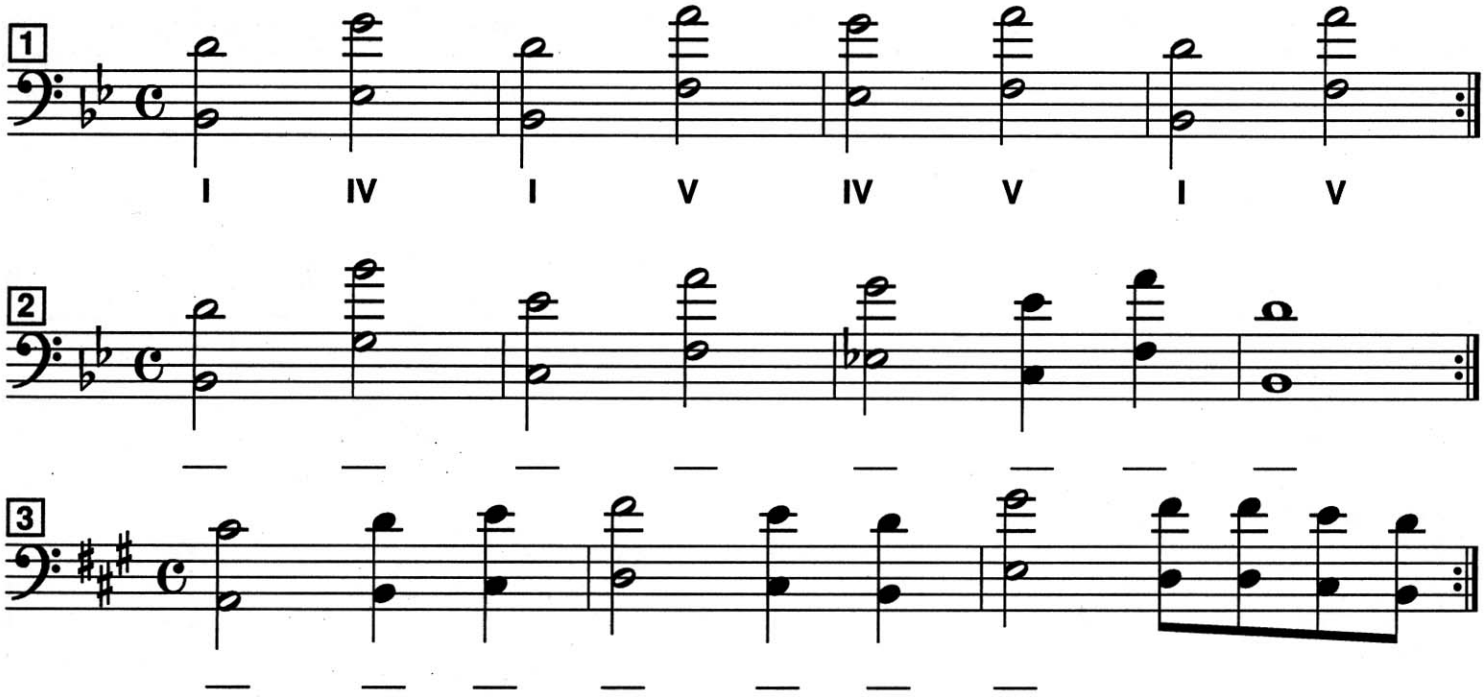
*3rd Pos.* Maj. 3rds 10ths Min. 3rds 10ths



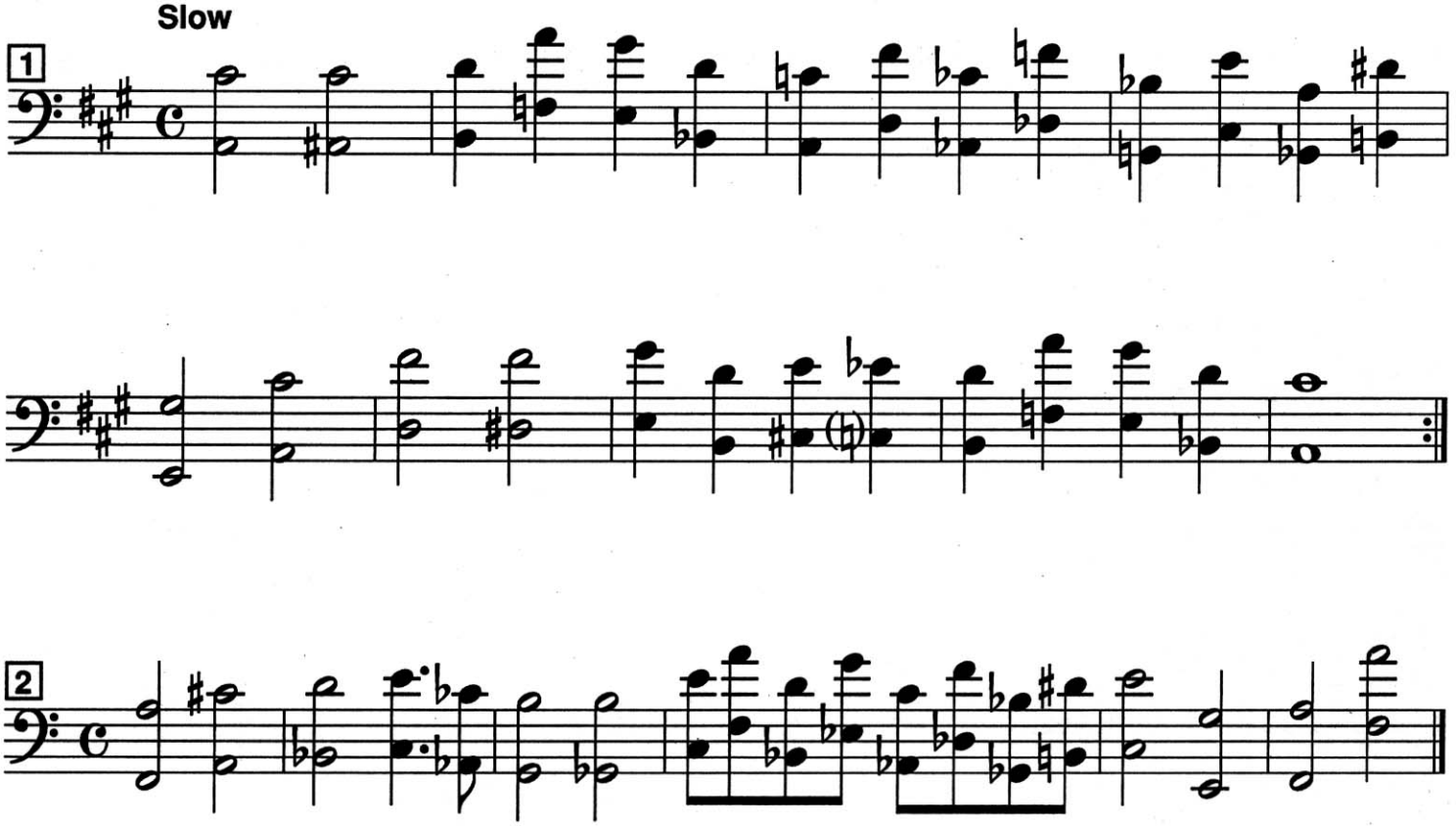
*11th Pos.* Maj. 3rds 10ths Min. 3rds 10ths



***Exercise 2:*** These exercises will help develop flexibility with 10ths and 3rds. Practice slowly and pluck with index and thumb or something similar. Just for kicks, write in a harmonic analysis in the blanks provided.




***Exercise 3:*** Getting a little more harmonically inventive is quite functional using 10ths with the "B" string. Most *of* these can be played on a 4-string, but are much easier and smoother on the 5-string. This is preparatory for "strictly" 5-string chords. Use the "B" whenever possible.

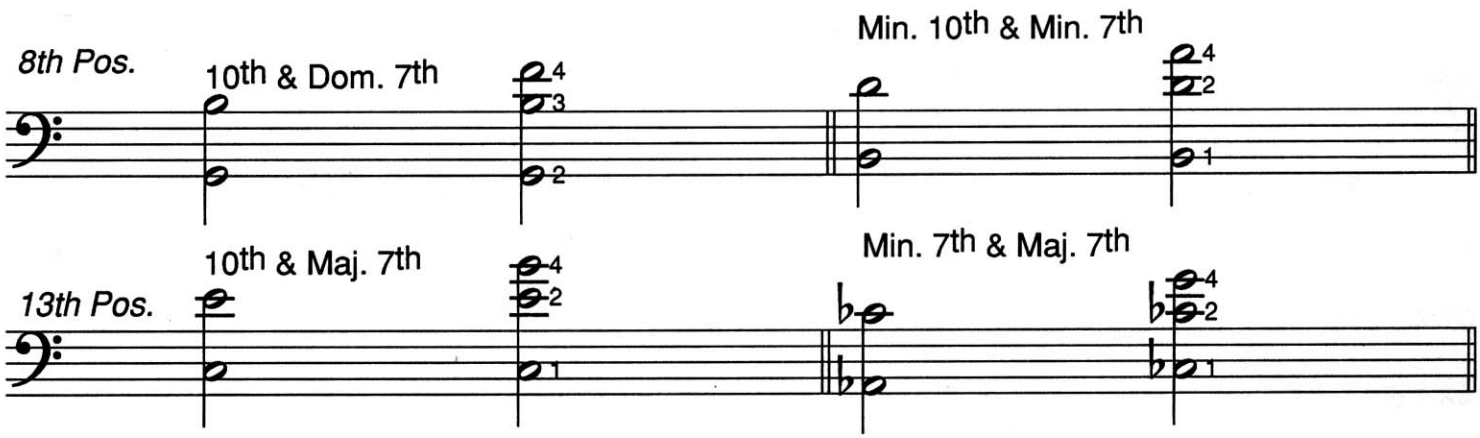


# UNIT EIGHT

## FIVE STRING CHORD VOICINGS

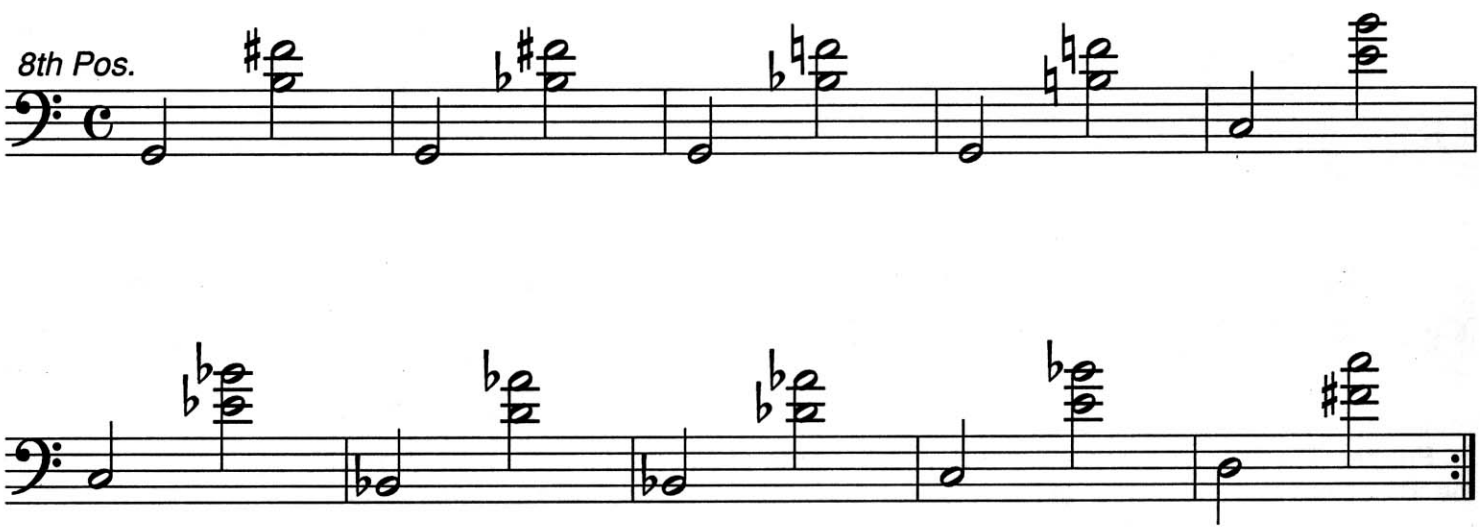
After 10ths, the next step is to add intervals to create unique "5-string bass" chords. These initially involved playing the root on the "B" with the 10th on the "D". We then add the 7th on the "G" string. The fingerings in Example 8-1 are suggested but others will work fine.

***EXAMPLE 8-1:***



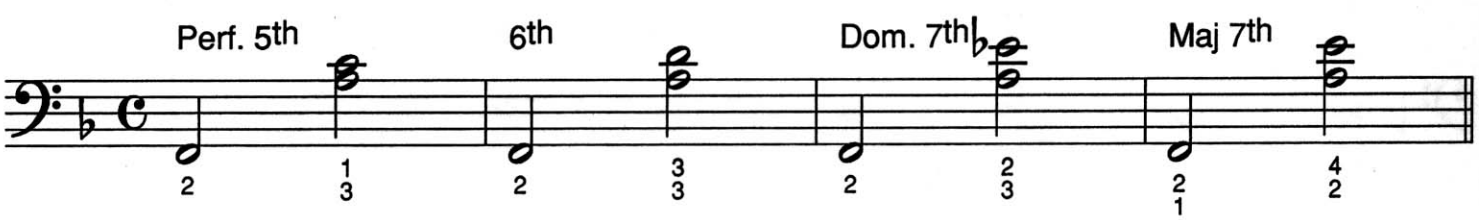

As you can see, these are quite harmonious. Before adding more chords and progressions, here are some examples to make this basic form solid.

***EXAMPLE 8-2:***



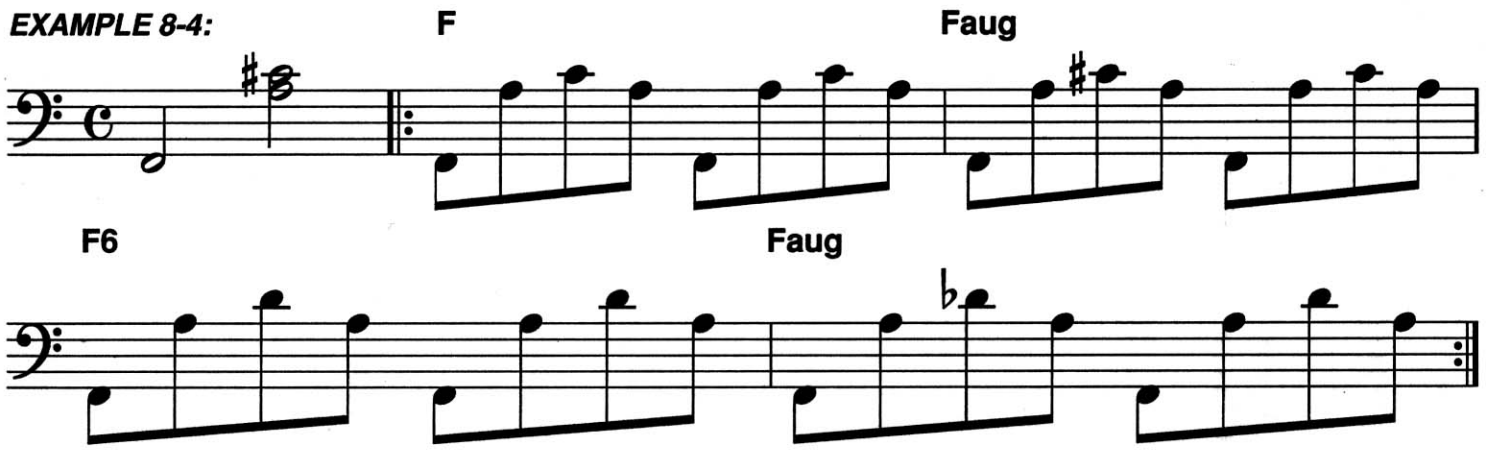

As well as putting the seventh on top, you can use 6ths (major & minor) and 5ths and if you can reach them, octaves (double).

***EXAMPLE 8-3:***



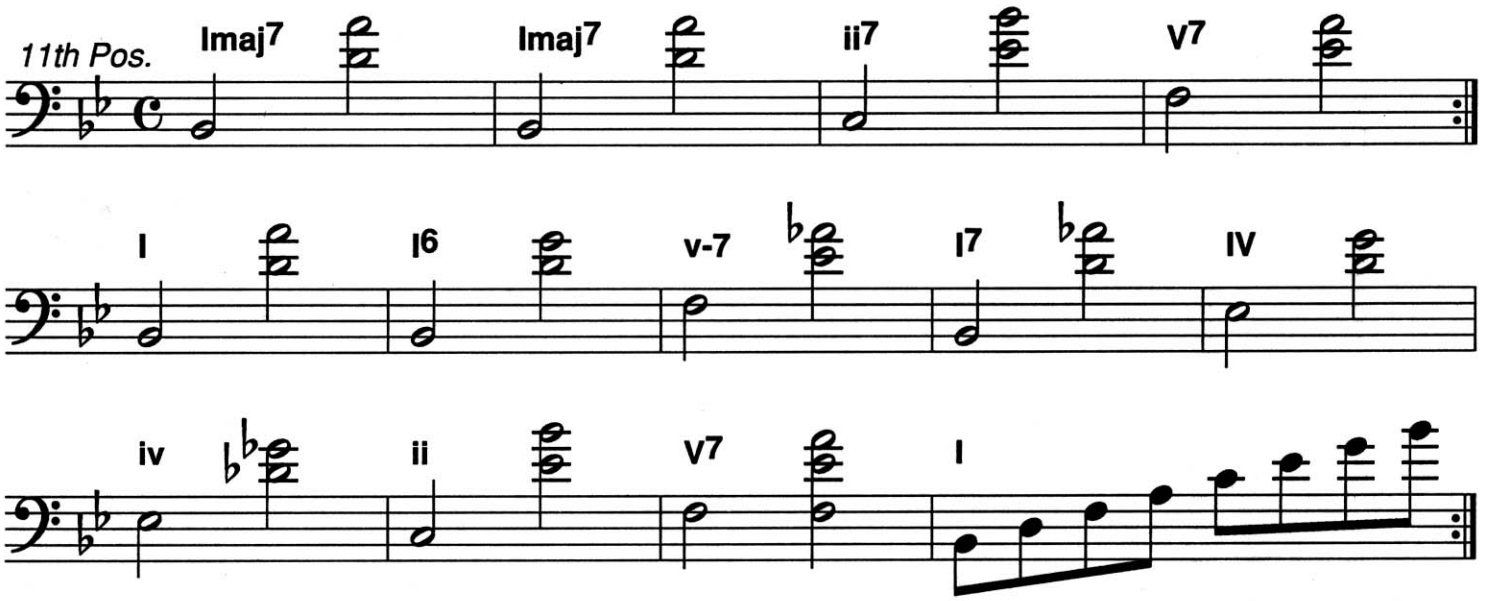
The augmented 5th functions well also. Let the low note ring.

***EXAMPLE 8-4:***



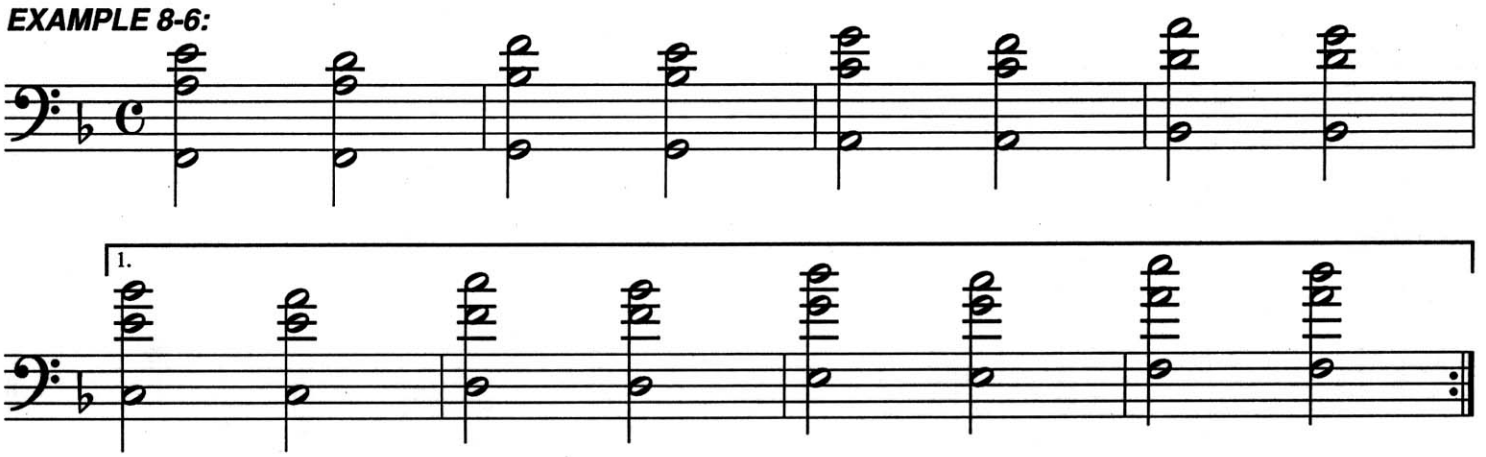

Combining these chords along with regular 4-string chords can put most chord progressions within easy grasp along with providing smooth voice leading.

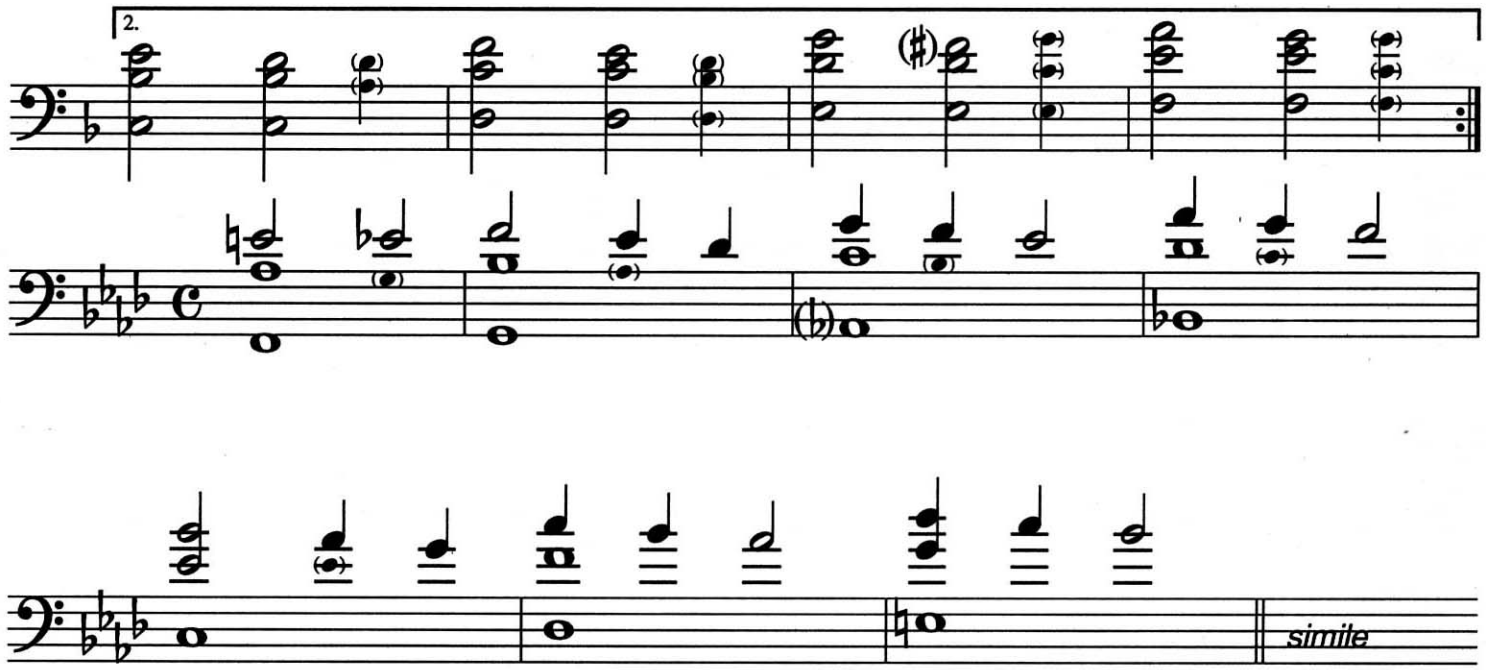
***EXAMPLE 8-5:***




Progressing through a scale, we find all the chords of that mode. Let's voice the major scales. Some stay on the "B", others move to the "E" string voicings (2nd ending). As you will see, *inner voices can move also.*

***EXAMPLE 8-6:***

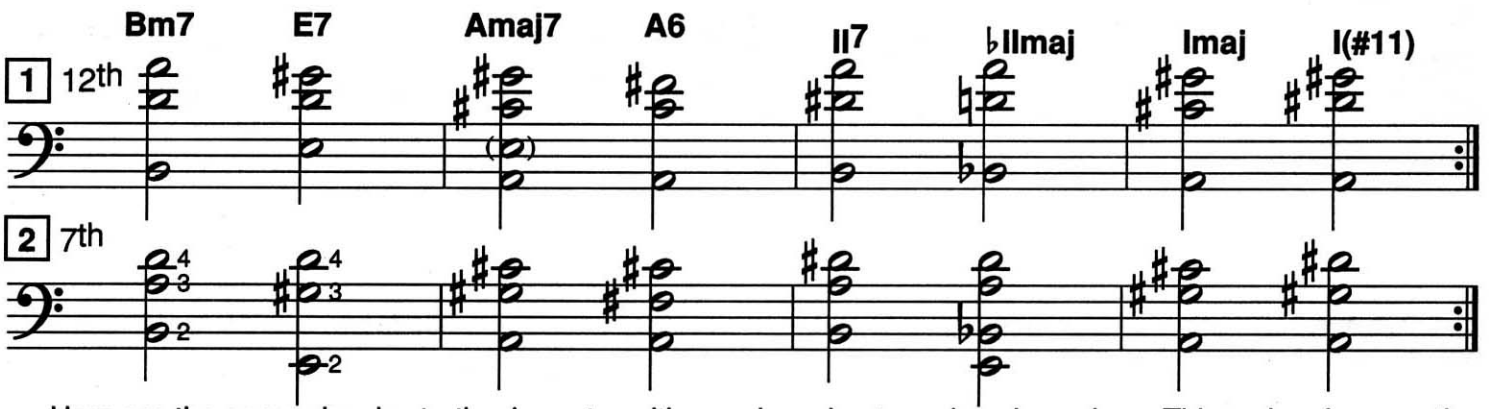





***NOTE:*** PRACTICE THIS BY TRANSPOSING TO ALL KEYS, etc. (Good luck on the fingerings of all the passing ton

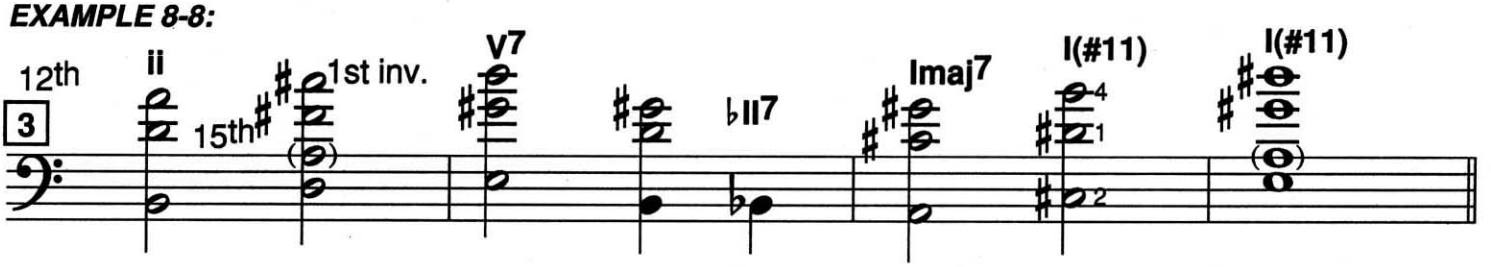
You can add different sound intervals with your spare finger.

***EXAMPLE 8-7:***



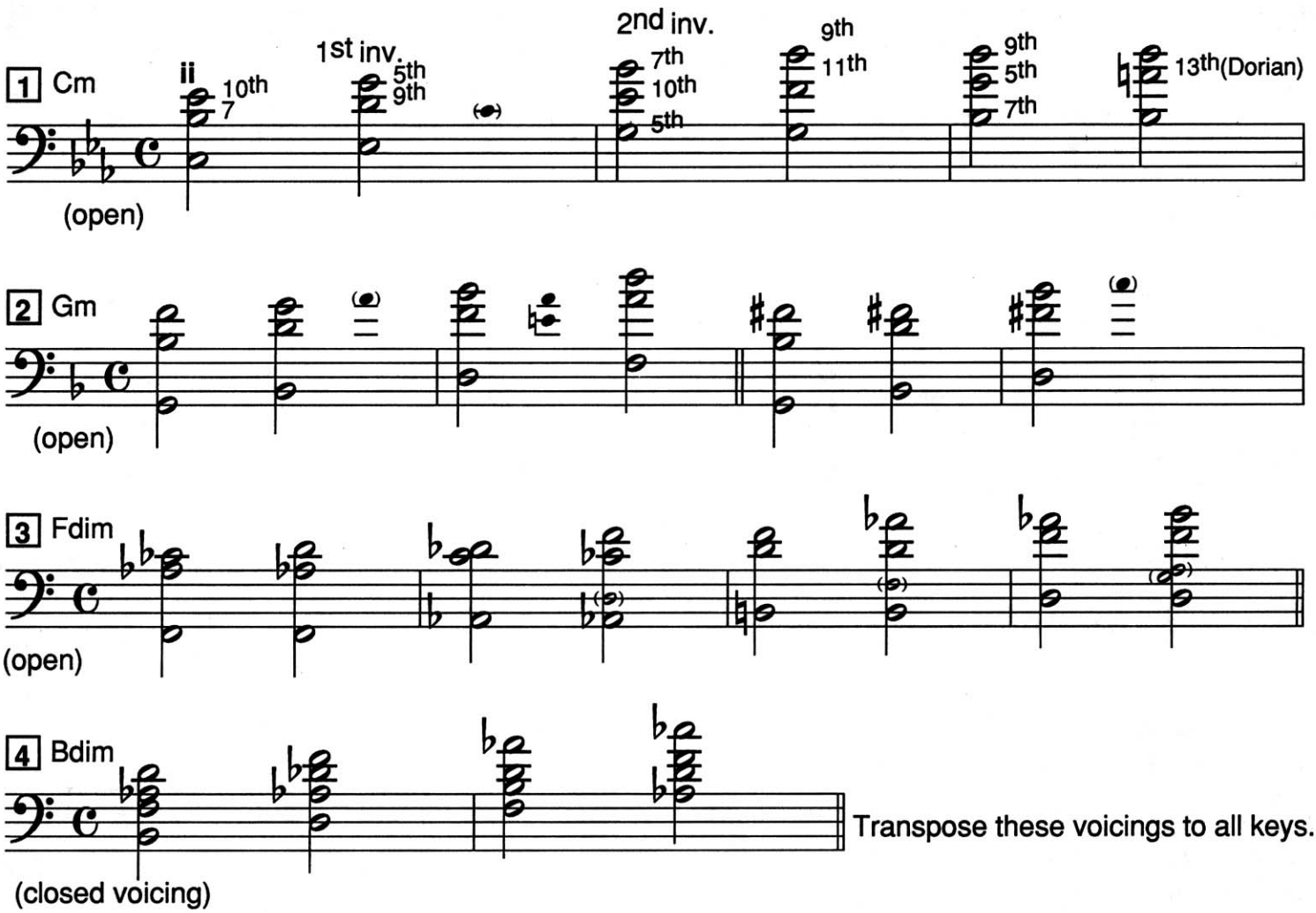

Here are the same chords starting in root position and moving to various inversions. This makes for smoother voice leading and more extensions.

***EXAMPLE 8-8:***




Feel free to arpeggiate these voicings. Make them as musical as you can.

***EXAMPLE 8-9:***




Transpose these voicings to all keys.

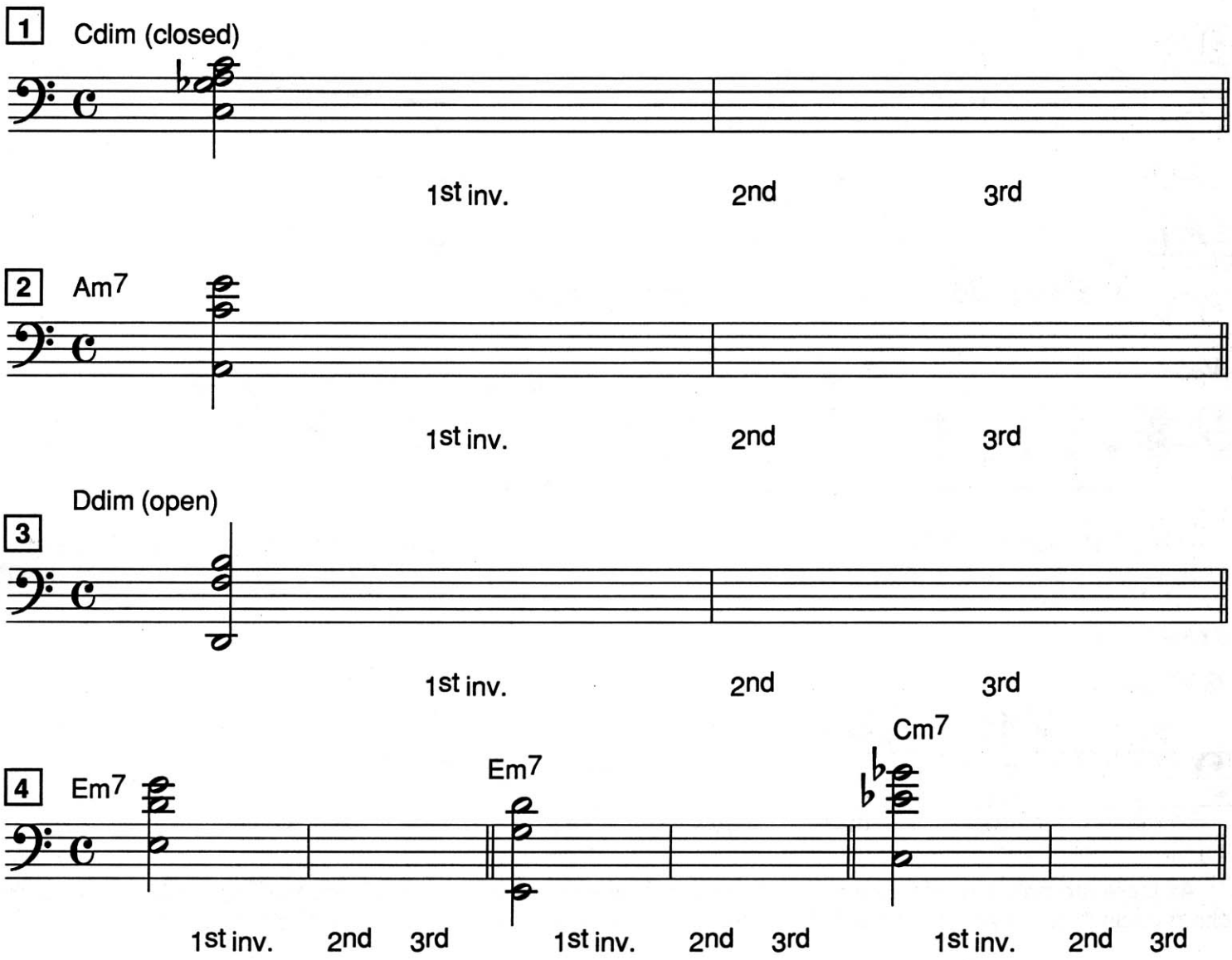
Once again, I'm leaving the fingerings up to you. It forces you to explore a little more. Don't forget to come up with some nice arpeggiation patterns.

These chord voicings are ideally designed to be used in a bass solo or a "solo bass" context. To use them in a group context requires a great amount of taste and technique: the taste to know where to use them, and where not to; the technique to pull them off clearly and accurately without disturbing the groove. Be open to the comments and criticisms of the musicians that you are working with. Don't let your ego get you fired.

# UNIT NINE

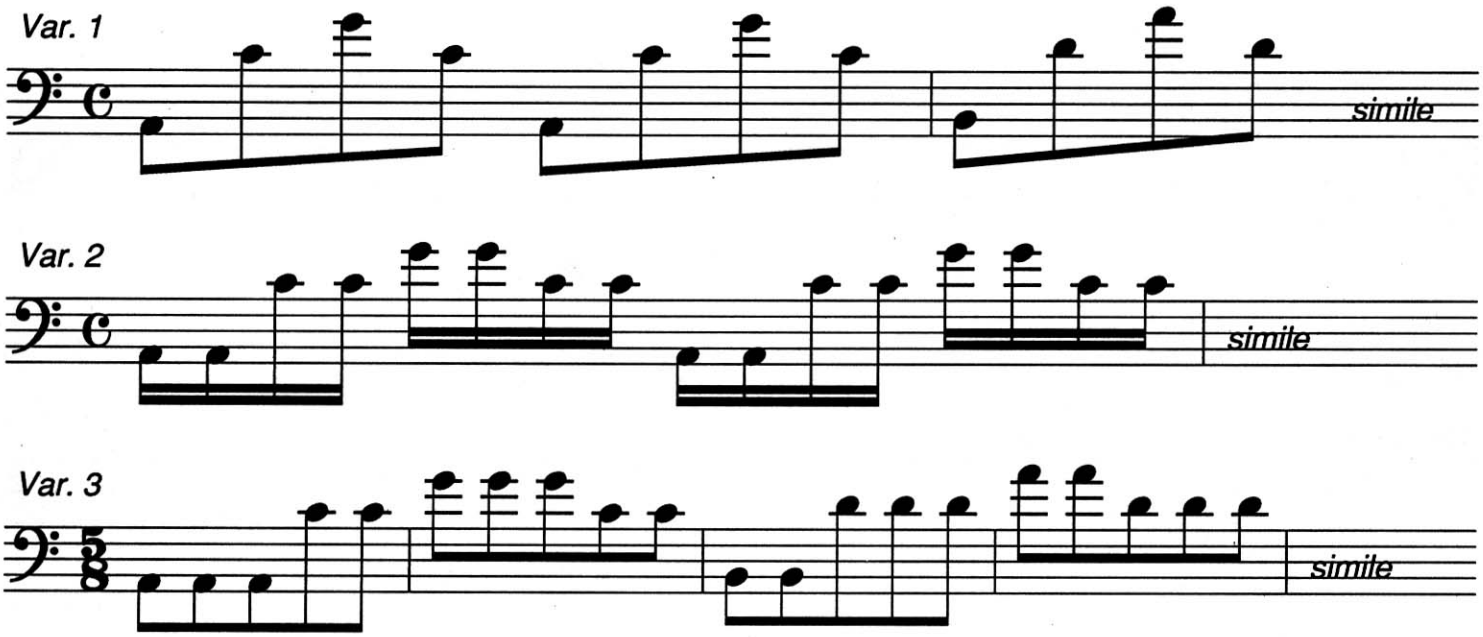
## MORE CHORD STUDIES

***Exercise 1:*** Write out and play voicings for these chords in the style of exercises 1, 2, 3, and 4 (from Unit 8, Examples 8-9). Play these as far as your bass will allow (21-24 frets and cutaway clearance). Arpeggiate them using various right hand patterns.



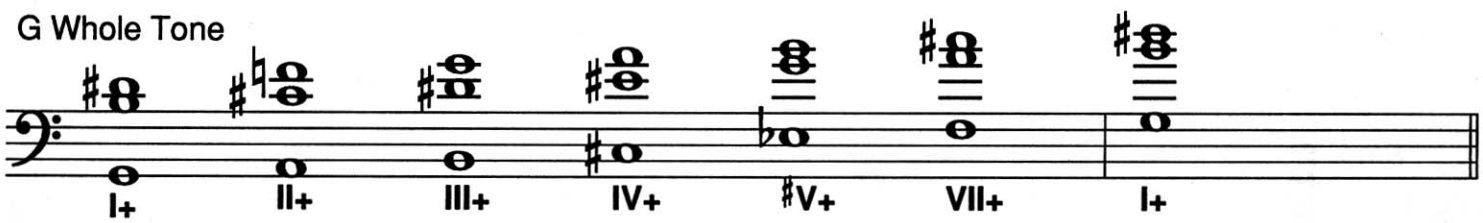
In the upper register, these chords work "chordally". In the lower register it is advised to arpeggiate them or use artificial harmonies (see *Advanced Rock Bass* lessons 6-10). When arpeggiating these chords, concentrate on clean right hand articulation.

***Exercise 2:*** Practice the patterns below on all your 3 note chords.



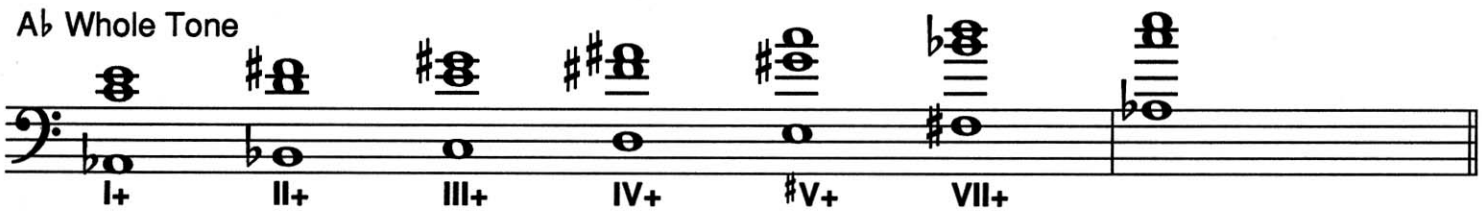

This parallel voicing can be used to harmonize any note in the whole tone (augmented chord) scale. It works nicely in a solo context as well as accompaniment.

***EXAMPLE 9-1:***

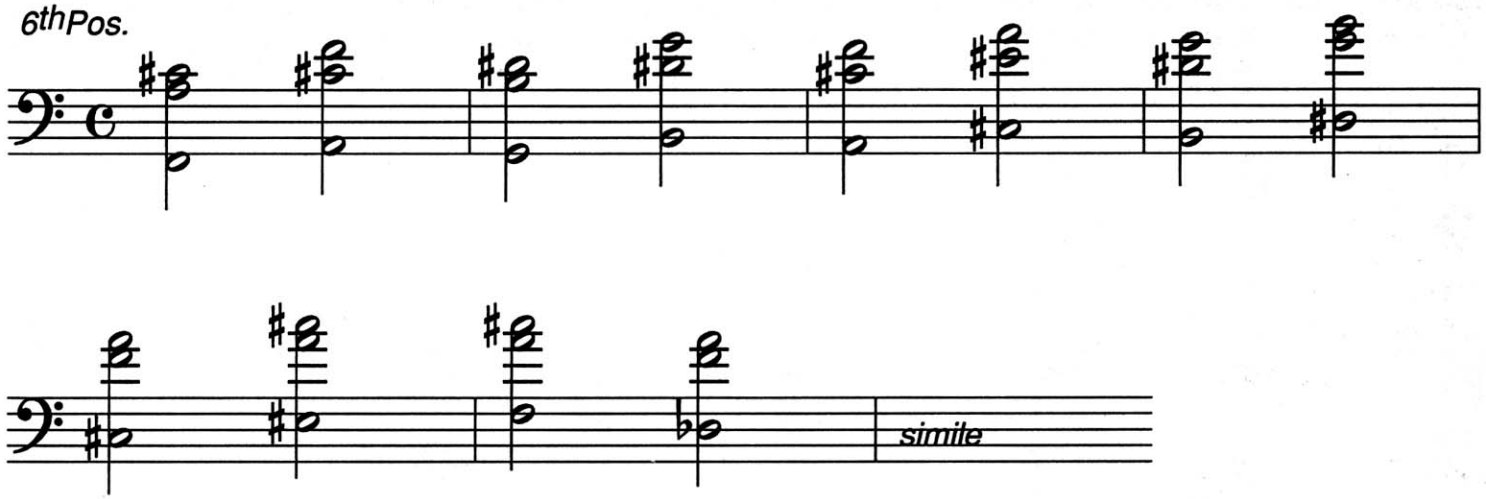


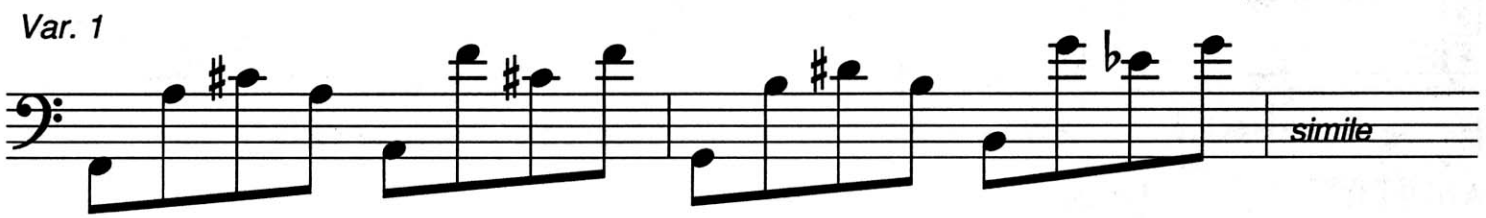

As there are only 2 whole tone scales (they are symmetric by whole steps), you can have most augmented chord voicings under your hand relatively easily, as long as you know the components of the scale.

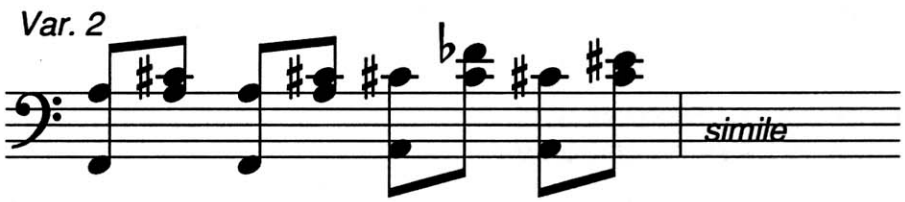
***EXAMPLES 9-2:***

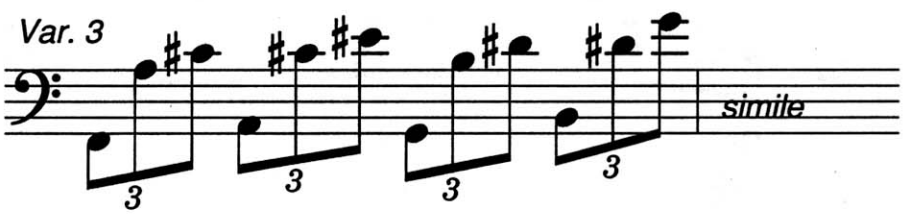


***Exercise 3:*** This is intended as a shifting exercise. Practice slowly at first, concentrating on consistency.



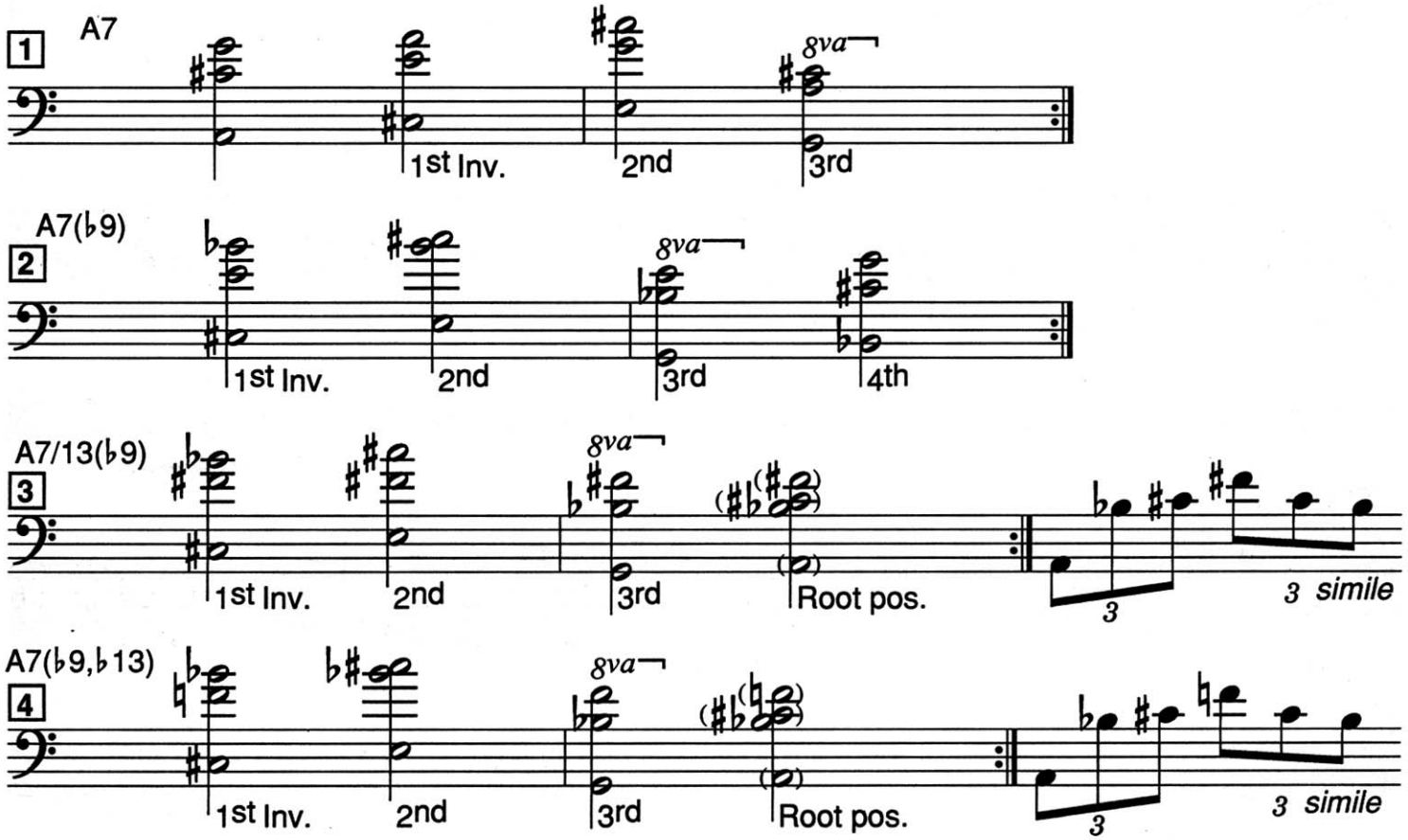




This is for R.H. picking.

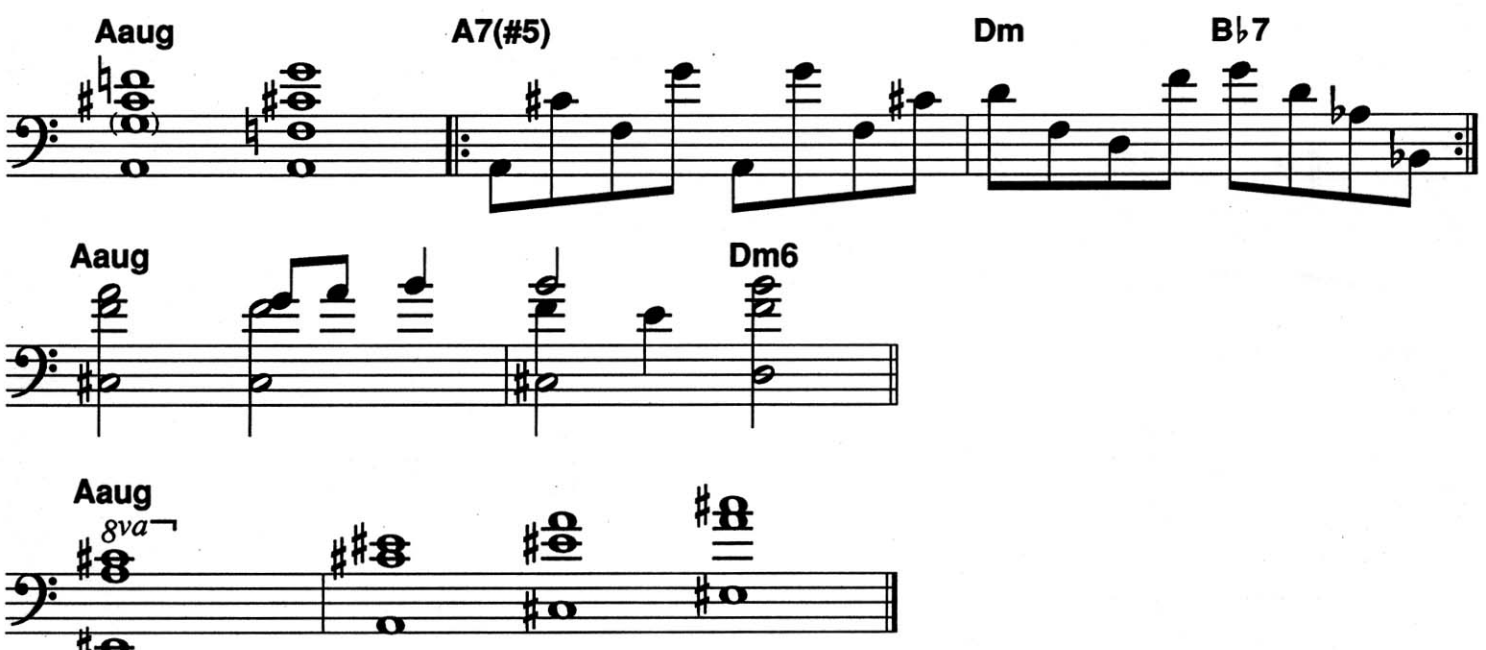
# INVERSIONS OF DOMINANT & AUGMENTED CHORDS

***EXAMPLE 9-3:*** Understanding chord inversions reinforces your fingerboard knowledge and provides many new ideas from which to concieve bass lines and solos. I would strongly recommend studying the appropriate scales, starting from the bass note of each inversion.




EXPLORE YOUR INSTRUMENT!!!
THERE ARE 12 KEYS, YOU KNOW!!

***EXAMPLE 9-5:***




As you can see, this voicing works on any note in the augmented triad.

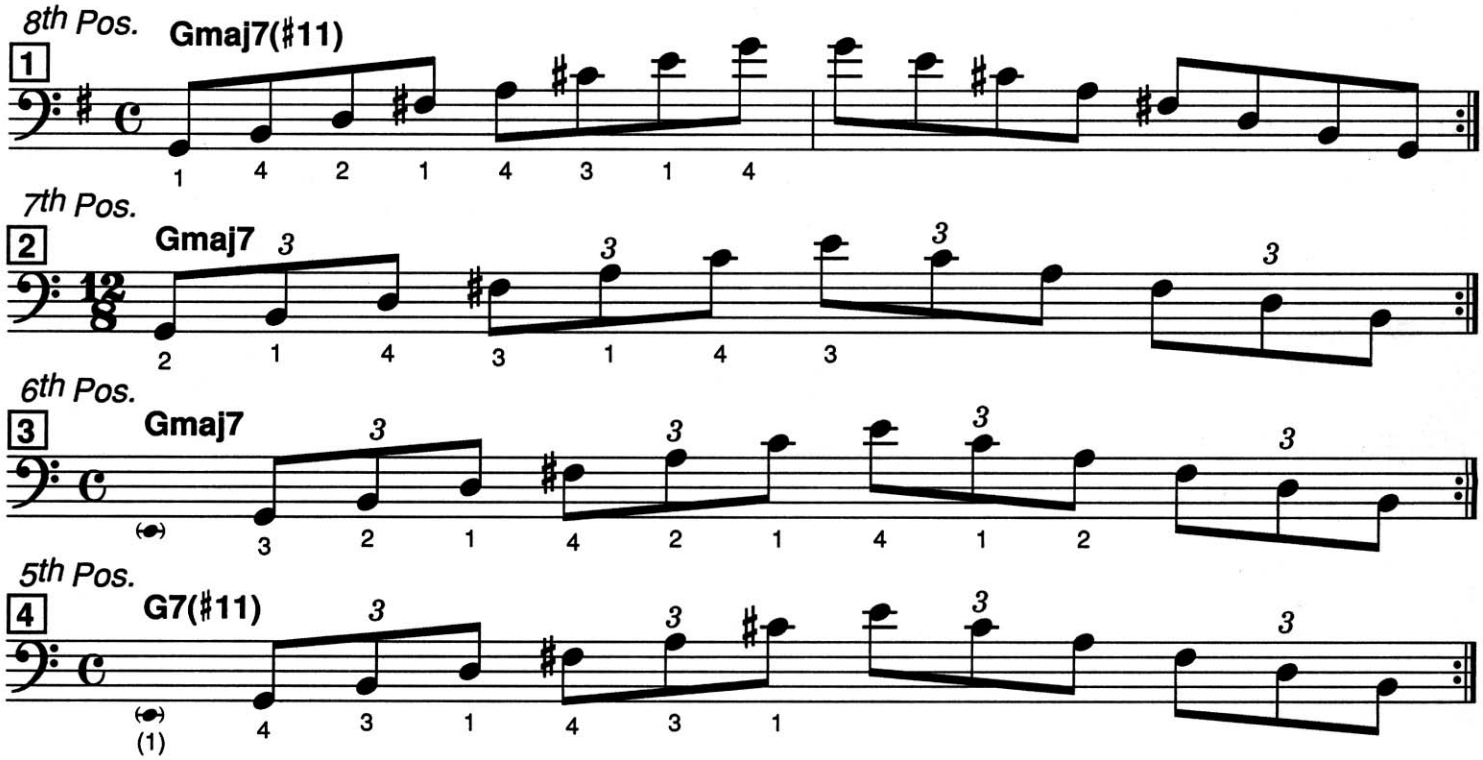
# UNIT TEN

## EXTENDED FINGERING ARPEGGIOS

These are extended fingering arpeggios that are good for a "stretch" and also encompass 2 octaves. The different fingerings for each will free up your position fears (start on every finger) as well as increase awareness of the fretboard.

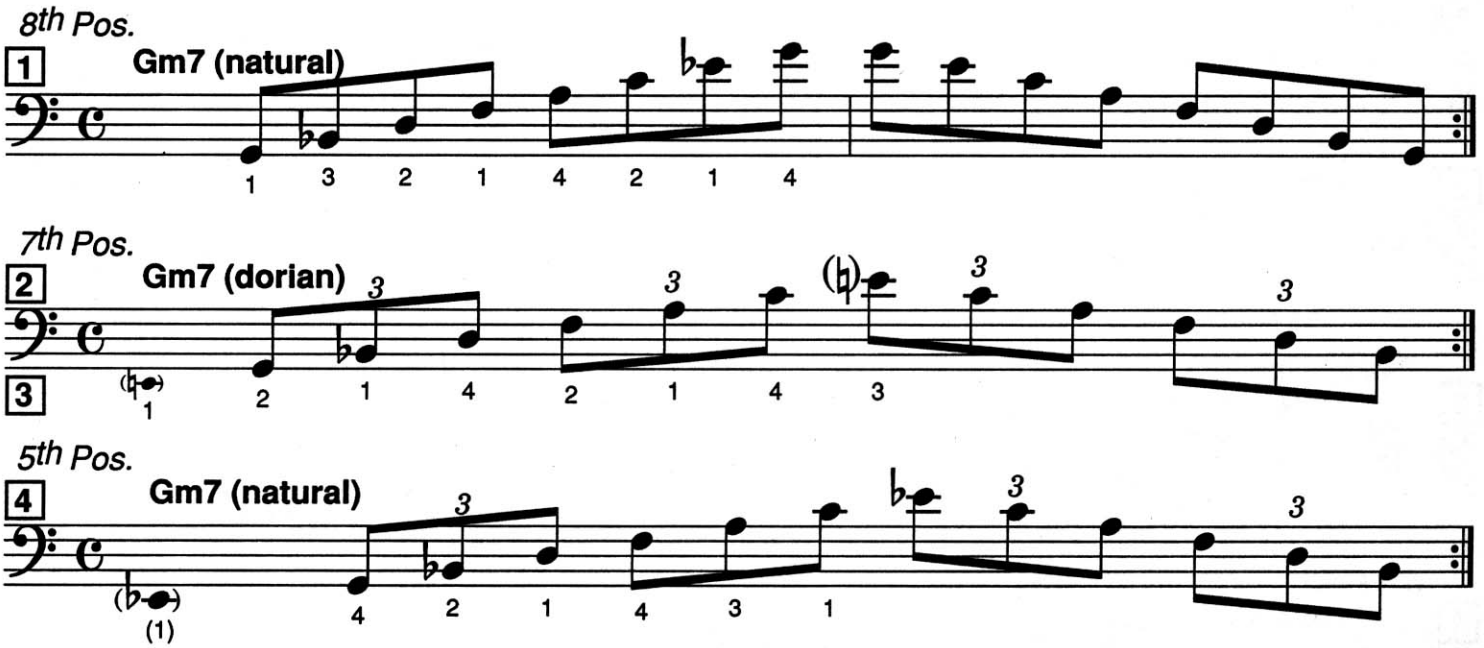
***EXAMPLE 10-1:***

### MAJOR ARPEGGIOS




***EXAMPLE 10-2:***

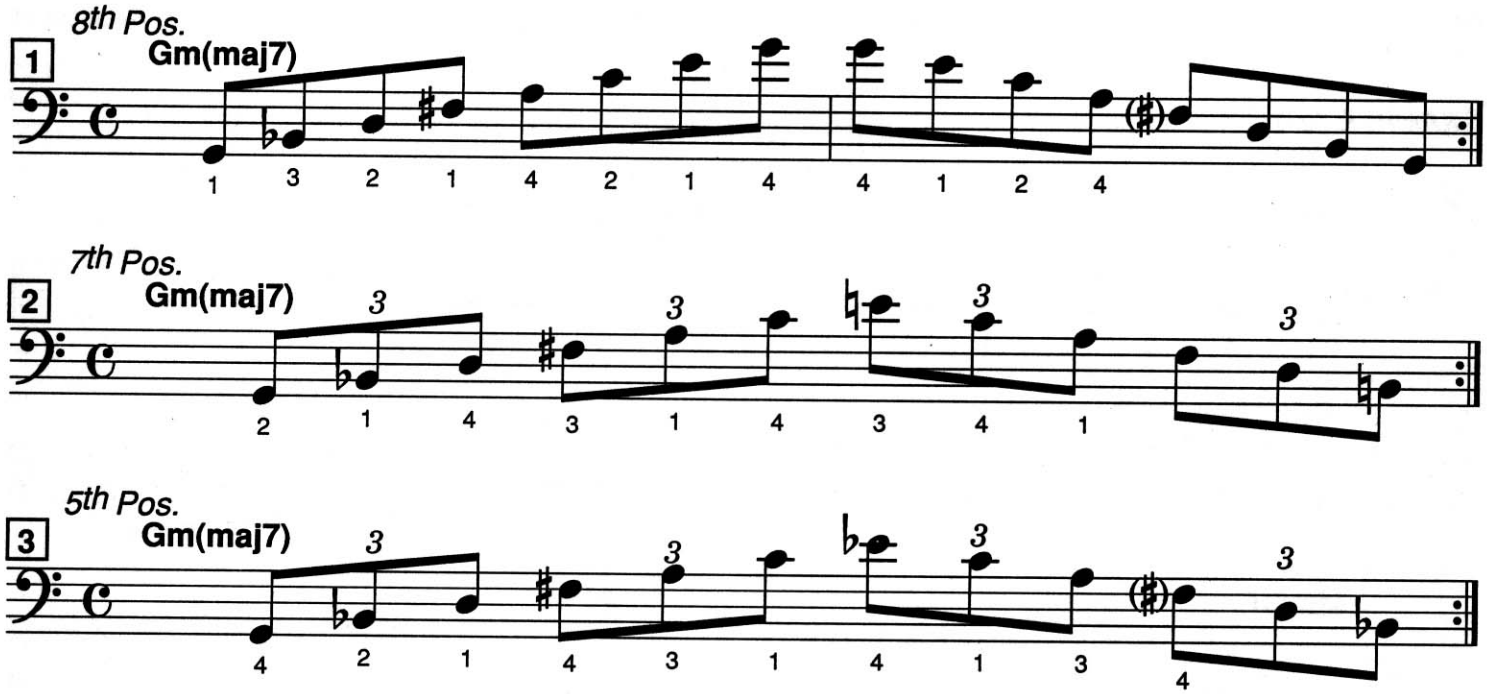
### MINOR ARPEGGIOS




STARTING ON 3 IN THIS ARPEGGIO *ALMOST* LEADS TO A DEAD END. IF YOU WANT TO DO IT, FIGURE OUT THE FINGERING THAT WORKS FOR YOU.

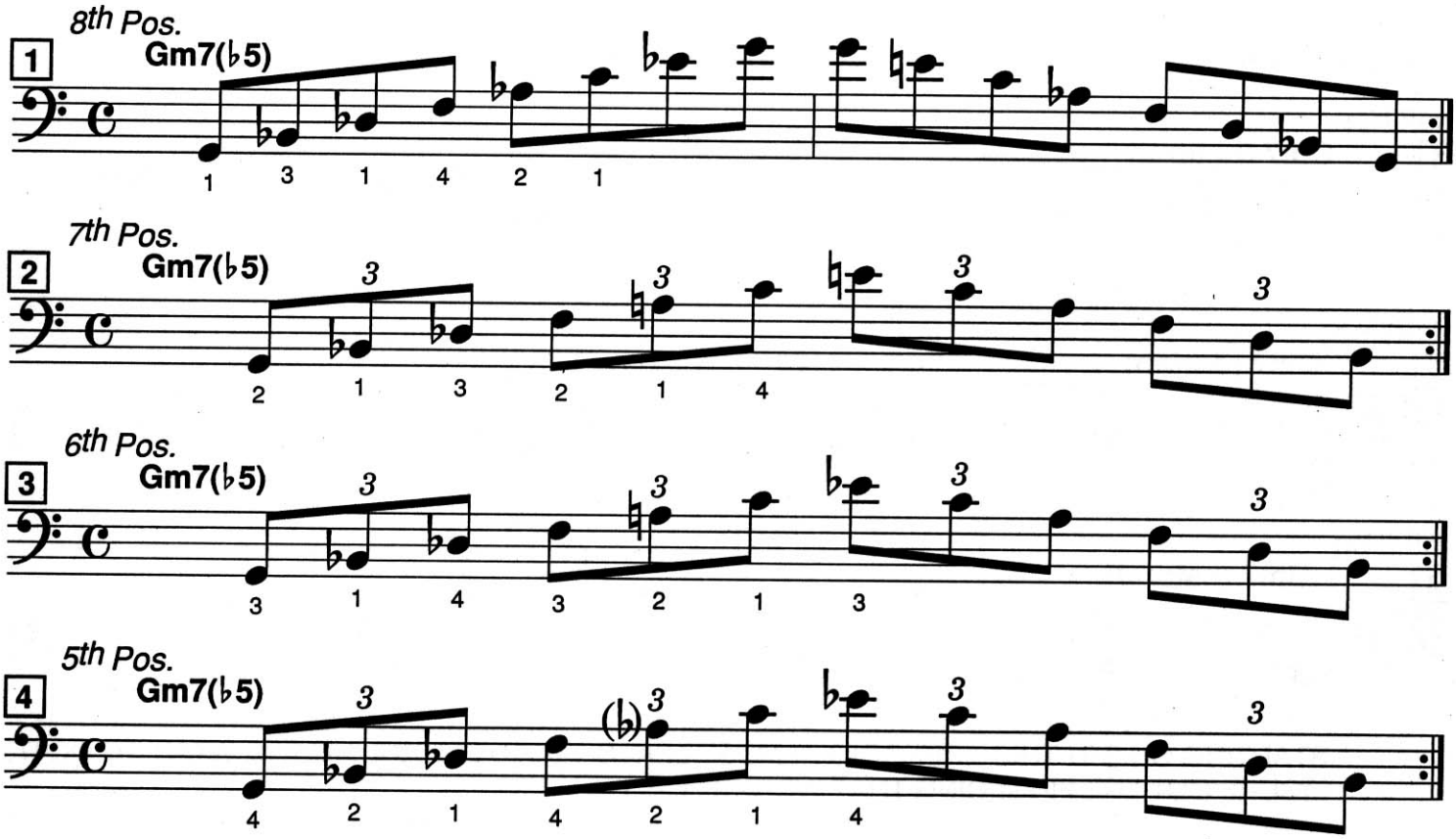
## MINOR / MAJOR 7 ARPEGGIOS
(2 Octaves)

***EXAMPLE 10-3:***



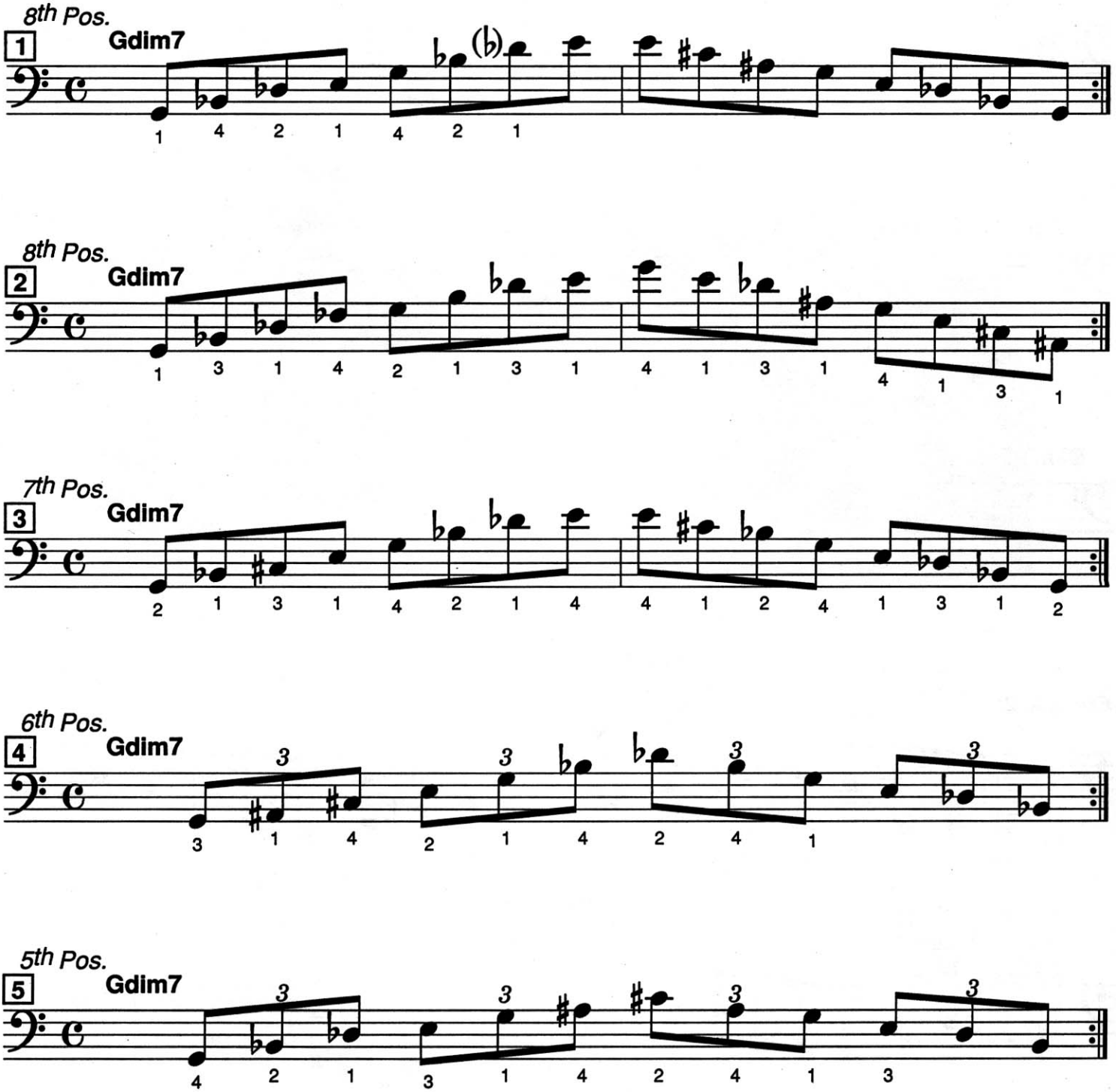

## MINOR 7(♭5) ARPEGGIOS
(2 Octaves)

***EXAMPLE 10-4:***



# DIMINISHED ARPEGGIOS
## (2 Octaves)

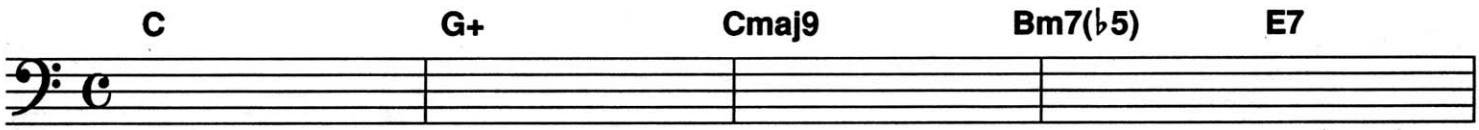
***EXAMPLE 10-5:***

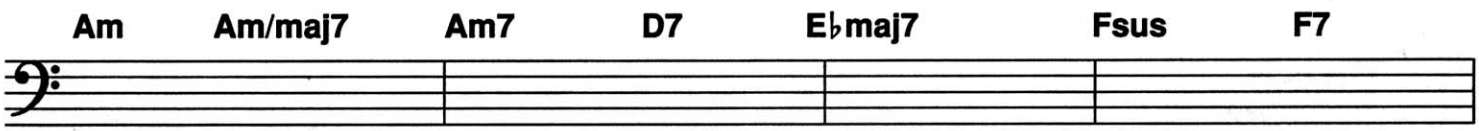


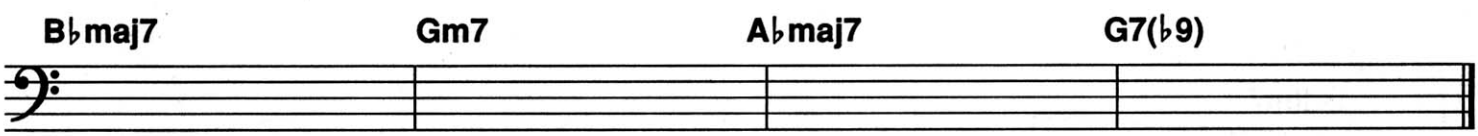

FOR A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF THESE EXAMPLES, PLAY THEM CONSECUTIVELY (ALL ARPEGGIOS WITH ALL FINGERINGS). PLAY AT A COMFORTABLE TEMPO WITHOUT STOPPING.

# CONCLUDING CHALLENGE

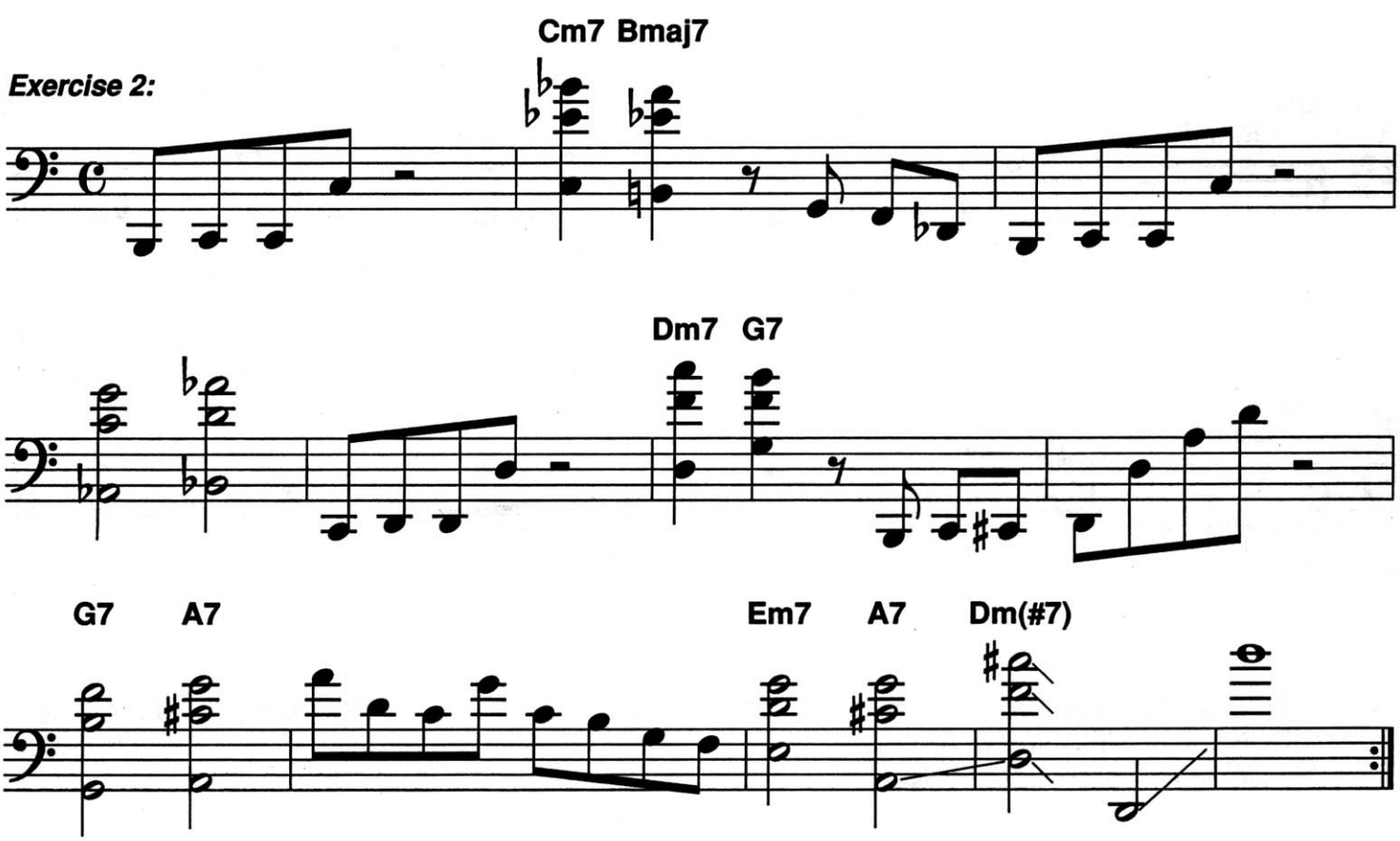
***Exercise 1:*** Write out voicings for the following progressions. Use smooth voice leading (as few wide jumps as possible). For chords lasting 4 beats, write root position and an inversion.

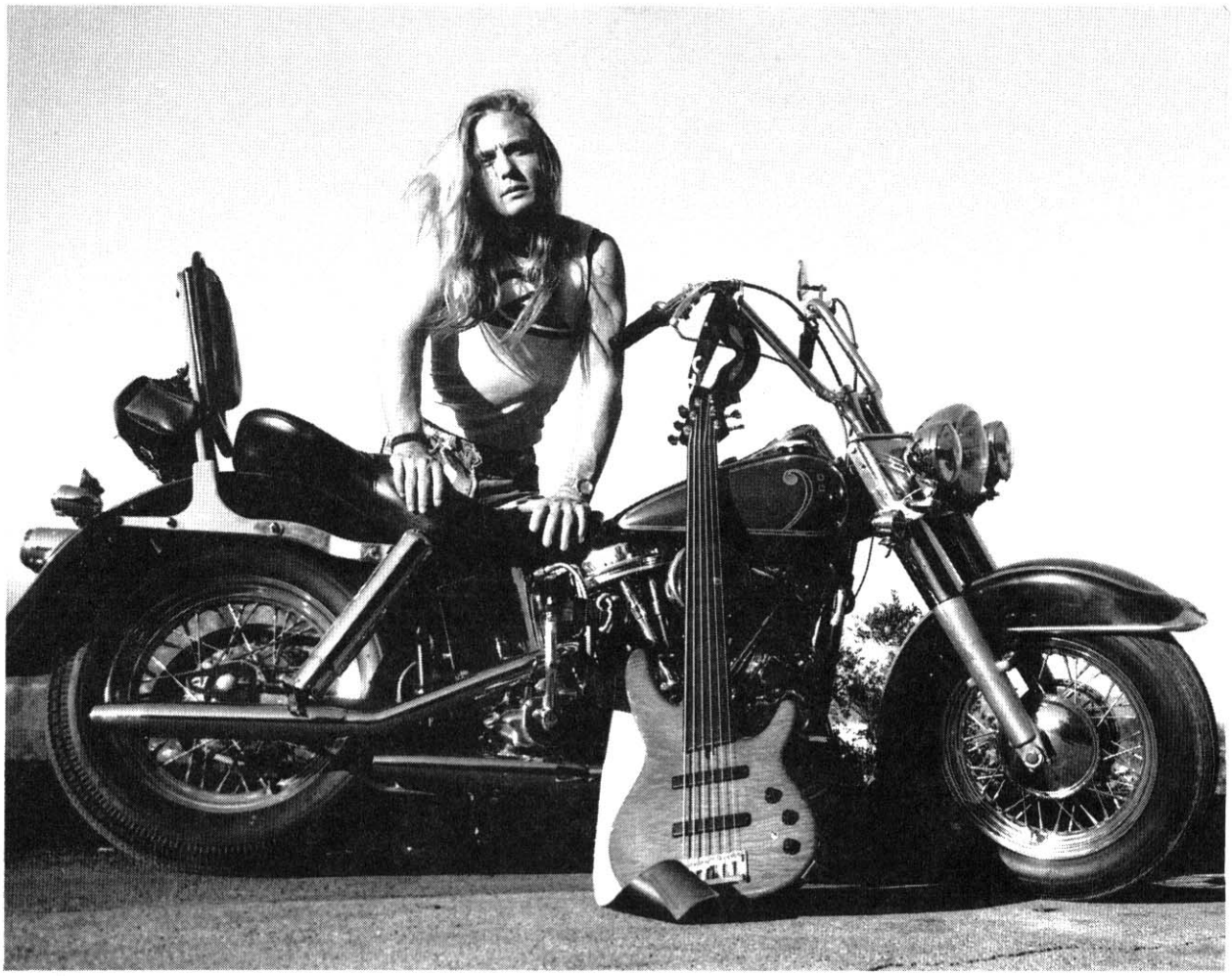



***Exercise 2:***





While growing up in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, **Steve Bailey's** surfing career was interrupted by an invitation to play bass in a junior high school rock band. Beginning his professional career at 15, he performed with regional orchestras, Southern rock bands, top 40 show bands, jazz groups, theatrical productions, recordings with regional artists, and a stint with the **"Four Coins",** a group with hits from the fifties and sixties.

While attending North Texas State and then the Univesity of Miami, Steve toured and recorded with **Paquito D'Rivera, Dizzy Gillespie, Ira Sullivan** and **Maynard Ferguson.**

Steve's desire to surf, led him back to the West coast where he now divides his time between session work, recording jingles, movie scores, "ghosting" on many rock recordings and touring and recording with **Larry Carlton, The Rippingtons, David Benoit, T Lavitz,** and **Kitaro.**

His innovative techniques on six string bass include: utilizing artificial harmonics, three finger right hand technique, and his unique chordal and intervallic approach to the fingerboard and the construction of bass lines.

Steve has performed solo bass concerts and clinics throughout the world. He is currently on the faculty of the Bass Institute of Technology in Hollywood, Ca.

Now pursuing a solo career, he has a new record release as well as an instructional video. Steve has been featured in bass magazines around the world.

photo: Margaret Ford Photography

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